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POET LORE

A MAGAZINE OF LETTERS

Founded in 1889 by CHARLOTTE PORTER *and* HELEN A. CLARKE

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TRISTRAM THE JESTER

ADAPTED AND TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF ERNST HARDT
BY JOHN HEARD*

CHARACTERS

MARK, *King of Cornwall*
ISEULT *of Ireland, Mark's wife*
BRANGAENE, *Iseult's lady*
PARANIS, *Iseult's page*
LORD DENOVALIN
LORD DINAS *of Lidan*
LORD GANELUN
UGRIN, *Mark's Jester*
STRANGE JESTER, *Disguise of Tristram of Lyonesse*
STRANGE LEPER, *Disguise of Tristram of Lyonesse*

Also: *Gaelic Barons. Ewan the King of the Lepers. The Lepers of Lubine, a Herald, the Executioner, Guards, the Strange Knight, Knights, Men-At-Arms, and a group of the inhabitants of the town.*

SCENE: *The Castle of St. Lubine*

Acts I, II and III were printed in the last issue, Vol. XLIII, No. 3

ACT IV

THE HIGH VAULTED HALL OF THE CASTLE

SCENE: *In the middle of the hall on the left opens a high staircase. In the background on the left, bay-windows; on the right, a broad, barred door. Through the grating one sees the outer court. In the middle of the wall on the right is a wide fire-place on each side of which jut out low stone benches. In front of the windows stands a table at which* DINAS *and* GANELUN, *the* FIRST *and* SECOND BARONS *are playing chess. In the foregound, a table on which chess-boards stand prepared for play. The table by the stone bench stands on a dais which is shut off from behind by a railing. On the dais and on the floor are carpets. Servants take wine flagons from a sideboard which stands on the left beside the stairs, and place them in front of the players. In front of the raised table* UGRIN, *the King's Jester, is asleep. The oil-torches give only a dim light. For a moment the players continue their game in silence.*

*With the exception of Act III, which has been materially changed, the general structure of the original version of the play has been kept. In the matter of the text a good deal of the wording has been modified; some speeches lengthened, some omitted, some added. A few minor characters and the "extras" used to make up crowds and to fill the stage have been eliminated.

Shortly before the outbreak of the Great War the two highest German dramatic honors were awarded to this play("Tantris der Narr"in the original and then contemporary). In the same year it received both the Kaiser Preis—for the best drama of the year—and the Volks-Schiller Preis—given once in three years for the best drama produced in the preceeding three year period. It was successfully performed on several of the National German Stages. (John Heard)

First Baron.

Take heed unto thy queen, Lord Ganelun,
Unless thou willingly dost sacrifice
Her to my pawns, as Mark gave Queen Iseult
Unto his lepers!

Ganelun.

Wait! for see, I move
My bishop back.

Second Baron.

Check, Dinas, check and mate!
Thou never shouldst have sacrificed thy knight,
For thus my rook escaped, attacking thee.

Dinas.

Forgive me that I heeded not the game.
My thoughts were sad and wandered from the play.
(Two Barons *enter from the courtyard.*)

Third Baron.

I can not grasp the meaning of these things.
I greet thee, Ganelun.
(*shakes hands with the other* Barons)

Second Baron.

At chess, my Lords!
Your blood must run full slowly in your veins!
(*comes forward*)

Ganelun.

King Mark has bid us play, and order'd wine
For us to drink, since otherwise 'twould be
A dull and sombre evening here to-night
Within the castle hall, for Queen Iseult,
I ween, will stay in her retirement.

First Baron.

King Mark hath summoned us as well.

Ugrin,

"O, God!
Men! Men! Bring lights and let me see the face
Of human beings round about!" So cried
My cousin Mark not half an hour agone,
As one on whom the mirth of loneliness
Falls all too heavily!

Second Baron.

What think ye, Sirs,
Of this most wond'rous thing?

SECOND BARON.

And do ye know
That Kaad, King Mark's old stable groom, beheld
St. George leap from the upper battlement
An hundred fathoms to the rocks below?
(THE BARONS *stand up and crowd about him.*)

FIRST BARON.

St. George?

GANELUN.

What dost thou say?

DINAS.

Dost thou know more?

SECOND BARON.

I know but what old Kaad himself recounts:
That, as he led Mark's charger down to drink,
There suddenly appeared before his eyes
The lofty shape of good St. George, erect,
Upon the wall!

FIRST BARON (*crossing himself*).

God save my soul!

SECOND BARON.

And then?
What happened then?

FIRST BARON.

Kaad thought at first he saw
Some mortal man and cried to him to heed.
Kaad's warning went unheeded or unheard;
The holy Knight leaped from the wall and fell.

GANELUN.

By what did Kaad first recognize the saint?

SECOND BARON.

By what I know not, but he swears 'twas he.
The people have declared a holiday
To mark this miracle of good St. George.

FIRST BARON.

What says King Mark about this miracle,
This saving of the Queen by God himself?
Hast seen him, Dinas?

DINAS (*returning to the table*).

Ay, his heart and mind
Are heavy and his soul distressed.

SECOND BARON.

And Queen

Iseult?

FIRST BARON.

What said the King of her?

GANELUN.

King Mark

Would neither see her nor have speech with her.
Both shrink from mentioning this ghastly deed
Which has occurred; its memory still throbs,
And tingling courses through their blood.

SECOND BARON.

And yet

He sent the Queen upon a a silver tray,
And without message too, the hand that pledged
A perjured oath to-day. And well he did.

FIRST BARON.

Ingloriously he died.

DINAS.

As he deserved

So died he, Sir.

(THE BARONS *sit down again at the table.* KING MARK *unnoticed by the others, comes slowly down the steps, and walks about. He is oppressed and agitated. At length he stops, and, leaning against the end post of the bannister, listens to the conversation of the others.*)

FIRST BARON.

A leper has been stoned
Because he cried throughout Lubine that 'twas
The devil who had done the thing.

DINAS.

Such leaps
By God or devil can alone be done.

MARK (*steps up to the table and lays his arm about* DINAS' *neck*)

Ay, Dinas, true.

FIRST BARON (*springing up*).

The King! Thy pardon, Sire!

MARK.

I thank you all that ye were not enraged
By what I did in madness, and have come
Again to me. I would not willingly
Have spent this night alone.

SECOND BARON.

Most cheerfully
We came. God's vindication of the Queen
O'erjoys us all.

FIRST BARON.

We all are here, save three,
Those three who stood as sponsors of the bond.

MARK.

Those three ride through the forest, and there seek
A man who, by the manifest of God
Is not and hath not been therein; I've sent
Them word to seek no more and to return.

GANELUN.

Give me thine hand, King Mark, for I am glad
That thou dost see how thou hast erred.

MARK (*His voice is bitter and despairing*).

I, too,
Am glad, for if this morning I appeared
A reckless youth, a stubborn fool who dared
In stiff-necked arrogance assert himself,
And set at naught your counsel wisely giv'n,
Forgive me. Passion is the heritage
Of man; his deeds the natural consequence
Of passion. Think ye not the same? And see,
How God, now for the second time hath wrought,
And sternly proved the truth! Is it, perchance,
His will that I should learn unseeingly,
Unquestioningly to revere His stars
On which our actions here on earth depend?
What think ye, Sirs? So seemeth it to me.
And therefore hath He hid from me that which
Most eagerly I wished to know. And then,
Before this veiled uncertainty, my blood
Ran riot in my veins. But from this day
I'll change my mode of life, and I will regard
My blindness and His unavoidable
Decrees; for wisdom lies in piety,
As says an ancient proverb; hence I will
Learn piety until I am become
A sage.

(*goes away*)

UGRIN (*calling to* MARK).
Ay, cousin, make thyself a monk!
MARK (*turning back*).
And I will learn to laugh at God that He
Should give Himself such trouble for a man
Like me—poor fool! Enough! Forgive my wrongs
In friendly wise, as I will overlook
Your sins with all my heart. But, if a man
Grown lately wise may counsel you, sin not;
Your work is the beginning, God's the end.
UGRIN.
Amen.
MARK.
I've broken in upon your game
And chattered on. Forgive it me, my friends;
Resume your play and cups; drink on, I pray.
(*He goes over to* UGRIN.)
Thy jokes are empty of all wit to-night,
Ugrin.
UGRIN.
My wit has fallen off, sayst thou?
Decay of time, believe me Mark; for wit
Is wine, and wine is poured into a cup
Of gold, and not into a cracked old jug;
And thou, enlightened cousin, art become
Since noon today a broken, ringless pot!
(*hands him his Jester's sceptre.*)
Here, hit thyself! Behold, the ring is gone!
My wit's too precious for a ringless cup.
At Easter tide I'll seek me out as lord
Some jovial soul who loves his wine; who plays
Wild pranks, and when he tires of his wife,
Gives her away!
MARK (*sitting down on the stone bench*).
Beware thy jests, Ugrin,
And heed thy tongue.
UGRIN.
Ay, cousin! Ay, 'twere best,
Since thou'st forsworn domestic quarreling!
MARK.
I wish that I might put thee on the rack,
And have thee whipped before I go to rest!

Instead, if thou can'st move Iseult to laugh,
I'll give thee two broad marks of purest gold,
And to the gold I'll add a scarlet cloak
For winter days.

UGRIN.

Well lined?

MARK (*takes him by both ears*).

I've set my heart
Upon it that Iseult shall laugh tonight,
So do thy best, my friend!

UGRIN (*stands up*).

I might, perhaps,
In brief, well-chosen words describe to her
How lepers love their brides. What thinkest thou?

MARK.

Poor fool!

UGRIN.

Or I might ask her why it is
That one's own husband should from jealousy
Attempt to burn his wife, and how it feels
To stand stripped bare before the leering crowd.
I might with heart-compelling words implore
Her to be kind—to love thee once again,
Good cousin! Surely she must laugh at that!

MARK.

Peace, fool! Thou weariest me.

UGRIN.

If thou intend
To grow thy beard in this new style I'll turn
Thy barber! I shall serve thee better then
Than now as fool! What say'st to this?

MARK.

O fool,
If only thou wast not a fool!

UGRIN (*noticing* ISEULT *at the head of the stairs*).

No fool
So great as thou thyself! Behold her now,
The woman whom thou gav'st away! O, fie!
Fool cousin, art thou not ashamed!
(*sinks to his knees and calls out*).
The Queen!

(THE BARONS *rise;* MARK *springs up and steps back a pace.*

ISEULT *remains standing on the bottom step.* BRANGAENE *and* PARANIS *are behind her.*)

ISEULT.

I greet you, Sirs, and of your courtesy
This boon I beg: consider what is past
A dream, since otherwise we could not find
Fit words or proper sentiments to stand
Before each other with unblushing cheek,
For very shame and horror at this deed.
(*She steps down into the hall.*)
My Lords, I bid you welcome, one and all!

GANELUN.

I kiss thy mantle's hem, O, Queen!

FIRST BARON.

So do
We all who stand before thee now. We feel
That thou art holy, Queen Iseult!

ISEULT.

Ye do
Me wrong in praising me too much, good friends.
I did but swear the truth. Play on, I beg;
I would not halt your game.
(*She turns to* MARK*; both stare at each other for a moment and then* ISEULT *speaks timidly, almost childishly.*)
I wish to play
A chess—with Mark and Dinas—that true friend.

MARK (*after a short pause, quietly and kindly*).

Play thou with Dinas first, since I, this morn,
Broke in upon thy game. I promised him
That he should play with thee.
(*He goes to the chest.*)
I'll choose Ugrin
As my opponent! Come, Sir Fool, and play
With me!
(*sits down on the chest*)

ISEULT.

So be it, Mark. Friend Dinas, come.
(*to* BRANGAENE)
Stand thou beside me here and help me worst
Mine adversary. Come.
(*She seats herself with* DINAS *at the raised table.* BRANGAENE *stands beside the table and leans over the bannister.* PARANIS *seats*

himself at ISEULT'S *feet.* THE STRANGE JESTER *slinks across the court and presses his pale, beardless face, drawn with suffering, against the bars of the grating. His head is shaved and his clothes are torn and ragged.*)

UGRIN

Laugh at me, Queen.

ISEULT.

I laugh, Ugrin? Why should I laugh at thee?

UGRIN.

I beg thee laugh; most fondly I implore.
Please laugh at me, Iseult. My cousin here
Hath promised me much gold if I can make
Thee laugh at me but once—I want that gold
So much!—Come, laugh at me Iseult!

ISEULT.

First earn
Thy gold, good fool. Be off, and let us play.

UGRIN (*kneels down by* MARK *beside the chest*).

Thy wife's not in her sweetest mood today,
Good cousin. Know'st thou why perhaps?

MARK.

A truce
To thy dull jokes! Come, play the game, Sir Knave!

ISEULT.

I'll take thy castle, Dinas! Heed thy game.

UGRIN (*humming*).

O, once there was a mighty King,
Who had a lady fair,
This King did love his beauteous dame
As though his wife she were—

ISEULT.

Thy castle falls—
(*softly*)
I hardly see the squares!
They sway and rock like billows on the sea.

DINAS.

Why weepest thou?

ISEULT.

I am not happy, friend.

PARANIS (*softly*).

O, God! There, see! Through yonder window's bars
There peers a man.

DINAS.
Where, boy?
PARANIS.
There! There!
STRANGE JESTER (*calling through the grating*).
Holla!
King Mark! Holla! Holla!
DINAS.
What's that?
MARK (*rising*).
Who storms
Outside my door? Such noises in the night
I will not brook. Who calls?
(UGRIN *runs to the grating.*)
STRANGE JESTER.
A fool; a poor
And witless fool. Let me come in. I'll make
New jokes to make thee laugh!—Let me come in.
UGRIN.
A fool!
BRANGAENE.
How came he here? He startled me!
ISEULT.
Indeed we weary of Ugrin's stale jests.
STRANGE JESTER.
I'm a poor jester that would come to thee,
So let me in, King Mark.
MARK (*going to the grating*).
The fools, it seems,
Smell out my door as carrion-vultures smell
A corpse.
UGRIN.
Cousin, let him be driven out!
I beg thee, have him whipped.
GUARD (*from without*).
I've caught thee, rogue!
MARK.
How came this strange fool past the gates, Gilain?
Wast thou asleep?
GUARD.
King Mark, this man has slunk
About the gate since it grew dark. He says

He wants to see thee. Many times have we
Already driven him away, but still
He sticks like pitch about the gate.
STRANGE JESTER.
I am
A jester from a foreign land. I wish
To come to thee, King Mark!
GUARD.
Behold the fool!
He cries like that unceasingly.
MARK.
Speak, fool,
What need hast thou of me?
STRANGE JESTER.
Mark, let me in!
I'll make such jests that thou, and all thy lords
And ladies die from laughing at my wit.
BRANGAENE (*laughing*).
The merry jests!
ISEULT.
This wandering knave intrudes
Too boldly!
UGRIN.
Rogue! O, shameless one! I'll give
Thee such a drubbing as thou ne'er hast felt.
MARK.
Know'st thou in truth, new jests?
STRANGE JESTER.
Ay, Mark, new jests
To make thee laugh or weep. Ay, merry jests!
(MARK *opens the grating and lets the* STRANGE JESTER *in.* THE JESTER *advances a few feet on the right, and stops to stare at* ISEULT. UGRIN *walks about him, examining him.*)
MARK.
Then come, thou jail-bird. Hark, Gilain, let now
The guard be doubled at the lower gate
That none, unnoticed, may come in.
STRANGE JESTER (*interrupting*).
But should
A stranger King arrive,—a stranger King
The master of this stranger fool—let him
Come in, Gilain.

ISEULT.
Play, Dinas, play thy game!
Their chatter wearies me.
MARK.
Now tell me, rogue,
Why clamor'st thou so loudly at my gate?
What wouldst thou? Speak.
STRANGE JESTER.
I wish to stay with thee.
(*laughter*)
SECOND BARON.
What cooked they in thy kitchen, Mark, tonight
That all the fools have smelt it out?
STRANGE JESTER.
I saw
The fire glowing in thy hall; I saw
The light and so I came—I'm cold.
UGRIN.
Then wrap
Thyself more closely in thy cloak, thou fool!
STRANGE JESTER.
I've given it away.
BRANGAENE (*laughing*).
It seems thou art
A tender hearted fool! And yet, methinks,
Thou hast not much that thou couldst give away!
MARK (*looking at the fool carefully*).
Whence comest thou, Sir Fool!
STRANGE JESTER.
I come from there—
From there outside, from nowhere else—
(*looking at* ISEULT *and in a soft voice—almost singing*)
And yet
My mother was Blanchefleur.
(ISEULT *starts and stares at him.*)
MARK (*goes back laughing to his seat.* UGRIN *follows him*).
Ha! Ha! The jest
Is poor. Hast thou no better ones, my friend?
Blanchefleur was mine own sister, and she bore
No fool like thee!
STRANGE JESTER.
Some other then it was

Who bore the self-same name and me with pain
And sorrow, Mark. What matters it to thee?
(*laughter.*)

FIRST BARON.

Our jesting rogue grows bitter in his mirth!

ISEULT.

Let this strange jester stand a little forth
That we may see him in the light.

MARK.

Come here,
Sir Fool, and stand before the Queen.

UGRIN.

He is
An ass as awkward as I e'er beheld!
So, cousin, judge by contrast 'twixt us two,
And see the priceless thing thou hast in me!

MARK.

Go, fool, be not afraid.

STRANGE JESTER (*steps in front of the stone bench on the left, opposite* ISEULT'S *table*).

I'm cold!—I'm cold!

ISEULT (*after looking at him for a moment breaks into a clear and relieved laugh*).

A sorry sight to look upon!
(THE STRANGE JESTER *hides his face in his hands.*)

BRANGAENE (*springing forward*).

The Queen
Is laughing—see! Made he some witty jest?
Why laughest thou, Iseult?

DINAS.

'Tis horrible
To see the fool's distorted face!

ISEULT.

He looks
So pitifully at me! it makes me laugh!

UGRIN.

I'm angry with thee, Queen Iseult! O, fie!
For shame. How couldst thou laugh at that strange fool?
(*turning to* MARK).
I pray thee, Mark, good cousin, wilt thou give
To him the two whole marks of gold?
(*During this time the* STRANGE JESTER *sits on the railing which*

joins the bench to the fire-place. He rests his elbows on his knees and his face on his hands. He stares at ISEULT.)

BRANGAENE.

Rejoice!
The King will give thee a reward since thou
Hast cheered the Queen.

STRANGE JESTER (*without changing his attitude*).

Would I could make her weep,
This Queen, instead of laugh!
(*soft and low laughter.*)

MARK.

How's that?

STRANGE JESTER.

Because
I am a fool for sorrow not for mirth!
(*laughter; the fool springs up*).
And none shall laugh when he beholds my face!
(*laughter; the fool seats himself again.*)

ISEULT (*earnestly*).

How strangely speaks the fool!

MARK.

My friend, I think,
That some one cut thee from a gallows!

STRANGE JESTER (*stares at* ISEULT, *slowly*).

Mark,
How proud and cold a wife thou hast! Her name's
Iseult, I think. Am I not right?

MARK (*smiling*).

Doth she
Please thee, Sir Fool?

STRANGE JESTER.

Ay! Ay, she pleases me.
(*laughter*)
Iseult the Goldenhaired!—I'm cold, King Mark!

ISEULT.

The fool is mad!—I like him not.

UGRIN (*to the* STRANGE JESTER).

Thou hast
Thine answer now!

BRANGAENE.

Beholdest thou the Queen
The first time now?

MARK.

Art thou a stranger, here?

STRANGE JESTER.

Mayhap I've seen the Queen before; mayhap
I never have.—I know not, Mark.
(*laughter*)

BRANGAENE (*laughing*).

A strange
And curious jest, i' faith!
(*to those laughing at the other table*)
Come here, my Lords,
For this new jester is most wondrous strange.

STRANGE JESTER (*in rising grief*)

I had a sweetheart once, and she was fair!

MARK (*laughing*).

Ay! I believe thee, friend!

STRANGE JESTER.

Yea, she was fair,
Almost as fair as Queen Iseult, thy wife.
(*laughter*)
I'm cold!

ISEULT (*angrily*).

Thou fool, why starest thou at me?
Avaunt!

STRANGE JESTER.

Laugh once again at me, Iseult!
Thy laugh was fair; and yet, methinks, those eyes
Must be still fairer when they overflow
With tears,—I wish that I could make thee weep,
Iseult!
(*a silence.*)

UGRIN (*going over to him*).

Ho, ho! Are those thy jokes? I'll fall
A weeping straight, thou croaking raven!

STRANGE JESTER (*springing up*).

Take
This fool away, or else I'll smite him dead!
(UGRIN *jumps backward.*)

MARK.

Thou art a gloomy jester, man!

BRANGAENE.

His jests
Are all of some new fangled sort.

MARK.

Speak, fool,
Whom hast thou served till now?

STRANGE JESTER.

I served King Mark
In far off Cornwall—.
(*laughter*)
And he had a wife,
And she was fair, with long and golden hair!
(*laughter*)
Dinas, why laughest thou?

(*The laughter dies suddenly; the* BARONS *who, with the exception of those at the Queen's table, had formed a circle around the* STRANGE JESTER, *shrink back.*)

DINAS (*startled.*)

My God! He knows
My name as well!

FIRST BARON.

'Tis passing strange!

SECOND BARON.

Thou!—Fool—!

GANELUN.

He's quick, and makes good use of what he hears!

ISEULT.

His jests are impudent,—I wish that he
Would go away! He wearies me.

MARK.

And yet
There's something in the knave that pleases me.
His madness lies still deeper than it seems—

UGRIN.

Ay, cousin, in his belly, for, methinks,
He has a stomachache!

MARK.

Tell us a tale.

STRANGE JESTER (*starting up*).

Why stare ye so at me, ye pack of rogues?
Why mock ye me?
(*in anguish*)

I'm but a fool, a fool,
A wretched fool! Send them away, King Mark,
And hear thou me. We'll stay here all alone—
The Queen, and thou, and I, and I will tell
Thee many pretty things, sweet things—so sweet
That one must shiver when one hears! Now send
Away the rest and bide thou here with me.

FIRST BARON.

Thou shameless rogue, thou shouldst be beaten.

MARK.

Leave
Him, Sirs, in peace. I like his foolishness,
Because he does not crack the silly jokes
That other jesters do.

STRANGE JESTER.

I, too, was once
As good a knight as they—!
(*laughter*)

GANELUN (*laughing*).

I wish I'd seen
Thee, knave!

STRANGE JESTER (*steadily*).

Thou saw'st me many times and wast
My friend, good Ganelun!
(*all step back nervously*)

FIRST BARON (*crossing himself*).

God save us, friends!
He knows us all by name!

ISEULT.

A gruesome fool!
Send him away, O Mark; he's mad.

MARK.

Say on!

STRANGE JESTER.

My tongue cleaves to my gums; my throat is parch'd!
Give me to drink.

MARK (*stands up and takes a goblet from the table*).

I had forgot, poor fool!
But thou shalt drink wine from a golden cup.
Thy foolishness has touched my heart. At times,
My Lords, 'twould be an easy thing to turn
To such a fool. Iseult! Come, pledge the cup

That he may have somewhat of which to dream
On cold and thirsty nights. Grant him this boon.
(*He gives* ISEULT *the cup.*)

ISEULT.

I pledge—

STRANGE JESTER (*jumping down from the bench*).

Drink not! Drink not!

(ISEULT *drinks and he waves aside the cup.*)

I will not drink!
I'll not drink with a woman from one cup
The self-same wine again.

MARK.

What hinders thee?

STRANGE JESTER.

Ask Queen Iseult.

ISEULT (*angrily and fearfully*).

O, Mark! He mocks me. Send
The fool away!

STRANGE JESTER (*throws himself on the ground before the dais and whispers low and tensely to* ISEULT.)

"For they who drink thereof
Together, so shall love with every sense
Alive, yet senseless—with their every thought,
Yet thoughtless, too, in life in death, for aye—
Yet he, who having known the matchless bliss
Of that intoxicating cup of love
Spits out the draught disloyally, shall be
A homeless and a friendless worm,—a weed
That grows beside the road"—So spake my love,
And handed me a golden cup of wine
And bade me drink. But evil came thereof—.
(*During his speech* ISEULT *sits stiffly in her chair, and bending backward, stares down at him in horror.*)

PARANIS.

The Queen turns pale!

BRANGAENE.

Iseult! Iseult!

SECOND BARON.

Lay hold
Of him! He is a conjuror.
(*A few men start to seize the jester—he jumps upon the bench.*)

ISEULT (*trembling with fright*).

Excuse—
My weakness—'tis—'tis but—let be—this fool's
Strange jokes are ghastly—they revolt my soul
And—made me faint—.

MARK.

Thou knave! I'll have thee whipped!
Tell me thy name—Who art thou! Speak!

STRANGE JESTER.

Come not
Too near!

MARK.

I have a dungeon deep and strong,
And I can have thee thrown to Husdent. He
Will tear thee limb from limb, thou conjuror!
Who art thou?

UGRIN (*in a friendly tone*).

Answer, friend, our cousin Mark
Speaks not in jest!

MARK.

Call in the guards!
(*A Baron tries to lay hold of the* STRANGE JESTER.)

STRANGE JESTER.

Stand back!
I'm but a wretched fool!—I have no name!
What matters it to you? I've smirched my name,
My noble name—so now I have no name.
I had one once that rang full true and high!
I've twisted it and dragged it through the mud!
(*in rising agitation*)
I broke my name, and throwing up the bits
I caught them as they fell, and threw again,
And caught; and so I played with my fair name
Until the fragments rang again and fell
At last back to mine hand, deformed and changed,
To stick, and make a name that is no name—
So call me Tramtris.

ISEULT.

—Tramtris—!

UGRIN (*claps his hands and rolls laughing on the ground*)

MARK.

Fool, what ails
Thee now?

UGRIN.

The jester jesteth. Seest thou not?
Why, turn it 'round! Tramtris—Tristram! He says
He was Lord Tristram! Ho!
(*laughter*)

GANELUN.

That was the jest
That he so cunningly devised!

FIRST BARON.

This shaft
Of irony has struck the mark, and hits
This day and thee, O, King!

SECOND BARON.

A clever fool!

MARK (*laughing softly*).

I wish Sir Tristram saw the knave!

FIRST BARON.

He'd laugh!

ISEULT (*trembling with anger*).

Let not thy nephew Tristram's knightly fame
And noble name serve as a mockery
To such a ghoul!

MARK (*gaily*).

Forgive me, fair Iseult;
And yet it moves my laughter when I think
That he went mad because he dreamed he was
My nephew Tristram. Speak, thou toy of fate,
Wast thou Sir Tristram once?

STRANGE JESTER (*almost timidly*).

Ay, Mark, I was;
And often was I with Iseult thy wife.
Forgive it me.
(*laughter*)

ISEULT.

O, Mark, dost thou permit
This filthy rogue to smirch thy wife's fair name?

MARK (*gaily*).

Heed not his words; the people love such jests.
(*to the jester*)
Give us a sign, Sir Fool.

UGRIN.

A sign! A sign!

Ay, let the fool describe the Queen! Give ear.
Twill be a royal sport! And first he shall
Describe her feet! Speak on!
(UGRIN *sits on the ground* ISEULT *hides her face.*)
BRANGAENE (*to* ISEULT *laughingly*).
He'll liken thee
Unto his wench!
MARK.
Why dost thou hesitate?
I grant thee jester's freedom, fool. Begin!
STRANGE JESTER (*softly and hesitatingly*).
From snowy pedestals white columns rise
Of ivory, draped in softly whispering silk,
And in all purity of line sweep up,
—The swelling pillars of her body's frame—
MARK.
A graceful speech, my friend. Canst thou go on?
STRANGE JESTER (*in rising agitation and feverish emotion*).
Her body is a gleam of silvery light
Cast by the full moon in the month of May,
Changed to the snowy marvel of herself.
Thou art a garden wild wherein there grow
Deep purple fruits whose juice is nectar-sweet
—An opiate draught that stupifies, yet thrills;
That cools and burns. Thy body is a church
Of rarest marble built—a fairy mount
Where sounds the music of a golden harp;
A field of virgin snow! Thy breasts are buds
Of the most sacred plant that flowering grows
Within the garden,—swelling fruits that wait
To suck the honeyed dew of summer moons!
Thy neck is like a lily's stem! Thine arms
Are like the branches of a blossoming tree—
A flowering almond tree—they point the way
Into that Paradise where rules the chaste
Perfection of thy rounded limbs, enthroned
Within thy wondrous body like a God
Who threatens from on high. Thou art.....
MARK.
O hear
How this imposter talks! The token, fool!
STRANGE JESTER (*softly, trembling and feverishly*).

Below the left breast of this masterpiece
Of His creation God has set his mark—
—A darkened cross—!

MARK (*hoarsely*).

O, seize the knave! The cross
Is there.—She bears the mark!

GANELUN.

Christ save my sou

FIRST BARON.

I feel an awful dread of this strange fool!

SECOND BARON (*drawing*).

I'll run him through the body with my sword!

STRANGE JESTER (*tears the sword from his hand, and springs upo the bench*).

Take heed unto thyself! Come not too near!
I'll cut thy heart out!

ISEULT (*ironically*).

O, his words are nc
So marvellously strange. Hast thou forgot
Good Mark, that once, upon a heaped pyre
Thou bad'st me stand, stark naked and exposed
Unto the rabble's gaze? It well may be
That this low jester cast his shaming eyes
Upon me then.

MARK.

Saw'st thou the Queen when sh
Stood on the burning pile?

STRANGE JESTER.

I saw the Queen;
I stood beside her there!

BRANGAENE.

Poor witless fool!
That vision made him mad.

STRANGE JESTER.

Glare not at me!
I'm but a fool made mad by memory;
A wretched fool who wished to tell you tales
To make you laugh—and weep.
(*almost screaming*)
For God's sake laugl

(*He throws the sword down. It falls clattering on the floo*

A guard enters while two others stand outside the grating with the STRANGE KNIGHT.)

MARK.

Whom bring'st thou there?

GUARD.

King Mark, thy messengers
Have found the witnesses that signed the bond.
They came too late, for in a forest glade
The witnesses had come upon a Knight,
And when they cried to him to stand, he fled.
They followed after till his horse fell dead.
He fought the three till he was overcome
And they have sent him hither unto thee.
The Knight is wounded and is nigh to death.
He is a stranger.

MARK.

See how heavily
God's wrath descends upon my head. This blood
I've spilled was innocent!

GUARD.

The man is near
His end; his dying wish is to behold
The Queen Iseult. He much desires it.

MARK.

'Tis well. Bring in the man. How things mischance!
My castle is a gruesome place to-day.
An idiot first, and then a corpse have knocked
Craving admittance to my hall! My Lords,
I pray you to forgive my sins.

PARANIS.

Here comes
The wounded Knight.

(*The* STRANGE KNIGHT, *half fainting, is carried by the two guards who hold him until he is before* ISEULT. *With a great effort he steadies himself and stands erect.*)

STRANGE KNIGHT.

Art thou Iseult, Iseult
The Goldenhaired? May God be merciful
Unto thy soul!

STRANGE JESTER (*crouches on the bench, taking no interest in what is said*).

My brother, Ganhardine!

In a disastrous hour went we forth.
I pity thee.
(THE STRANGE KNIGHT *half turns and looks at him searchingly.*)
GANELUN (*angrily*).
Will death not close thy mouth,
Thou cur!
MARK.
Dost thou then know this man?
STRANGE JESTER.
Ay, Mark;
I've said so Mark! I'll sit beside him here
Until he dies. I'll be his priest.
STRANGE KNIGHT.
Keep off
This babbling fool; his chatter shames my death.
DINAS.
Methinks this was the man I saw today
At dawn, as I rode through the wood, and yet
He bore a shield on which I thought I saw
Sir Tristram's arms.
MARK.
What art thou, gallant Sir?
STRANGE KNIGHT (*calmly and quietly*).
I'm one who knoweth how to die. Lay me
On yonder bench and wrap me in my cloak.
(*He is laid on the bench near the chimney, and lies there like an effigy.*)
MARK (*to the* GUARD).
Where are his shield and arms?
STRANGE KNIGHT.
I bore the shield
Of Tristram, Lord of Lyonesse, since we,
For our great love, exchanged our arms. I am
His brother, for my sister is his wife.
Sir Tristram greets thee, Mark.
MARK (*to him passionately*).
Speak, Sir, and end
This ghastly quandary in which I stand.
God shall reward thee. Where is Tristram now?
STRANGE KNIGHT (*groaning*).
Sir Tristram wed Iseult of Arundland;

She is my sister and he loves her well.
Tristram is with Iseult; he holds her dear—
Dear far above all else within the world.

STRANGE JESTER.

Thou liest, brother, yet thou speakest truth!

MARK.

God mocks me, Sirs! God mocks me!

STRANGE JESTER.

I will watch
By him, and guard his body through the night.

GANELUN.

Be still, thou toad! Be still!

GUARD.

King Mark, the Knight
Upon his left hand wears a ring—a stone
Rich set in gold. Shall he retain the ring
Upon his hand?—He's dead.

STRANGE JESTER (*seizing the ring*).

The ring is mine!
I gave it him!

GANELUN (*striking him*).

Away! Thou damned thief!

STRANGE JESTER.

The ring is mine. My love once gave it me,
And sware thereon; but now I will bestow
It as a jester's gift on Queen Iseult.
(ISEULT *takes the ring, looks at it a moment and lets it fall. She totters.*)
Cast not away my gift!

BRANGAENE.

Help! Help! The Queen.

ISEULT (*in great agitation*).

O, God, I pray Thee open now mine eyes,
And set me free! Am I alive or dead?
There lies a corpse—There stands a ghost and I
Between them here! I hear a moaning sound
Pass whimpering through the halls—!
(*She runs to the stairs.*)
Let me go hence!
Brangaene, come, and thou Paranis, too!
(*Half way up the stairs she turns.*)
Be not too angry with me, Mark, for thou

Hast set a loathsome ghost to mock at me
To make thee laugh. He makes my heart grow cold.
My blood is frozen. Come, Brangaene, come!
This awful game is past enduring. Come!
I will not be the sport of filthy knaves.
(*She hastens up the stairs.*)

STRANGE JESTER (*springs onto the table to look after her*).
Iseult! O, Queen Iseult, thou fairest one,
Have pity on my leper's soul!

GANELUN.
Be still,
Thou croaking raven!

FIRST BARON.
Smite him dead and spit
Upon his corpse!

SECOND BARON.
Thou filthy worm!

MARK.
Lay hold
Upon the jester! Hold him fast. Thou fool,
Thou base-born cur, how dar'st thou vex my wife
So bitterly with thy presumptuous wit?

STRANGE JESTER.
Mark, heed thy words!

FIRST BARON (*catching his wrists from behind*).
I have the knave!

MARK.
The guards
Shall whip the rogue for his bold impudence,
And cast him from the castle gates. Let loose
The dogs upon him if he does not run,
And leave my walls as though they were on fire!
Away with him!

UGRIN (*in greatest haste and agitation*).
King Mark, O, good King Mark,
Behold, he is my brother in my kind,
A much abused and crazy fool who means
No evil with his foolish jests! See now
How pitiful his mien! He strove to make
Thee laugh in his poor way as I in mine.
Forgive the knave, and drive him not away

Into the darkness like a snarling cur
That whines about the house! He hungers, too,
For thou hast giv'n him naught to eat or drink
Since he has been beneath thy kingly roof.
I am an old, old man, King Mark; he is
My brother, and a jester like myself;
I pity him! So let me keep him here
Until tomorrow's morn that he may sleep.
I'll gladly share my bed and cloak with him.
Then, when the sun shall shine upon his road,
He shall depart and seek a dwelling place.
'Twas thou thyself encouraged him to jest;
Judge then thy guilt and his with equal eye.
He is a fool, a crazy, blundering fool,
Yet drive him not away! Let him, I pray,
Sleep here beside me for a little while
To rest him. See how pitif'lly he looks!

MARK.

Why, Ugrin, friend, 'tis new for thee to act
The part of charity!

UGRIN.

I serve thee, Mark,
With foolishness and jests—and thou but know'st
Me by my services.

MARK.

I still can make
One person glad tonight! Keep, then, thy fool;
But thou must stand for him as surety,
Should he attempt to set the hall afire,
Or in his madness do some other harm.

(THE BARON *lets the* STRANGE JESTER *go; he crouches on the dais.*)

UGRIN.

Thou art indeed my dear, kind cousin still!
Good-night, fair cousin, go and sleep Thou needst
It sorely, and I pray that thou forget
Not my new wisdom!

MARK.

Sirs, I wish you all
A restful night, for this has been a day
Of many cares and many tribulations.
To-morrow shall we bury this brave knight

With all the honors due his noble rank,
For he was innocent.

GANELUN.

Sleep well, King Mark!

FIRST BARON.

May God watch o'er thee, Mark!

(THE BARONS *go up the stairs; the guards go out. The servants extinguish all but a few of the lights.*)

MARK (*on the stairs*).

Come, Dinas, come;
Together we will watch a little while.
My heart is very sorrowful tonight!

DINAS (*following him up the stairs*).

I'll stay with thee until the morning break.

UGRIN (*calling after them*).

And, cousins, take good heed ye catch not cold!

(*They leave the stage, the moon shines through the grating, and the shadow of the bars falls into the hall.* THE STRANGE JESTER *crouches motionless.* UGRIN *turns to him.*)

UGRIN.

Ay, so they are! "Whip, whip the fool!" We rack
Our weary brains to make a jest and then,
In payment, we are whipped if such their whim!
They treat us more like mangy curs than men!
(*He goes to the table where the food stands, and takes a bite.*)
Art hungry, brother? Wait, I'll bring my cloak,
For thou art cold.
(*He draws a cloak from under the stairs.*)
'Tis here; beneath the stairs,
I sleep.—A very kennel! 'Tis a shame.
(*He eats again.*)
Wilt thou not eat a morsel of what's left
Upon the table here? Nor drink a drop?
'Tis not forbid; our cousin lets us eat
And drink of what he may have left.
(*He goes into the middle of the hall and bends down to look into the* STRANGE JESTER'S *face.*)
Art sad,
Dear brother? Speak to me! Look not so sad.
(*bending over the corpse of the dead knight*)
Behold, this man is colder still than thou.

Art thou afraid of him? He'll not awake.

(*comes close to the* STRANGE JESTER *and covers him tenderly with his cloak.*)

I'll wrap thee in my cloak that thou may'st sleep.
Dost thou not wish to sleep? Why then I'll sing
A little song to make thee sleep. Alas!
I know but joyous songs! Come lay thee down.

(*He sits on the bench and draws the head upon his lap.*)

Why brother, art thou sorrowful? Hast thou
A sorrow? Tell it me; here canst thou rest.
And I will sing a song. Thou seem'st a child
To whom one must sing songs to make it sleep.
I'll sing the song the Queen is wont to sing
At even by her casement opened wide,
When she thinks on Sir Tristram, her good friend
Whom she still loves. Ay, 'tis a pretty song.

(*With bowed head and closed eyes he hums very softly. The body of the* STRANGE JESTER *under the black cloak that covers it is shaken by sobs.*)

"Sir Tristram, my friend, is unfaithful,
God's anger on him shall descend;
Though cruelly he has betrayed me—"

CURTAIN

ACT V

SCENE: (Same as Act IV) *The first glow of dawn shines through the grated door and windows, becoming brighter until the end of the act.* THE STRANGE JESTER *sits cowering on the steps of the dais.* BRANGAENE *comes hesitatingly down the stairs; she carries an oil-lamp in her hand.*

BRANGAENE (*Her voice is muffled by fear*).

Still here, thou ghastly shadow of the night,
Thou ghost uprisen from the past?

STRANGE JESTER.

I am.

And like the past, I stay and can not die.

BRANGAENE (*looking for something on the ground*).

Methought King Mark had paid thy jests with stripes,
And driven thee forth. And yet thou sittest here,
Still in the self-same spot and starest on

With blear'd and fish-like eyes Dost thou not know
That day is come? Fool, if thou hast a heart
Through which the warm blood flows, I pray thee go.
Go ere the Queen come down and see thee here.
Begone!

STRANGE JESTER.

What seekest thou?

BRANGAENE.

I seek the ring;
The ring that Queen Iseult let fall last night.

STRANGE JESTER.

The ring is mine; I have it.

BRANGAENE (*angrily*).

Queen Iseul
Desires the ring.

STRANGE JESTER.

I will not give it up

BRANGAENE.

The Queen will have thee hung if thou refuse
To yield the ring. She wants the ring.

STRANGE JESTER.

Iseult
Received the ring; she cast my gift away,
As she threw me away. I'll keep it now.
But if she wishes it so earnestly,
Let her then come and beg the ring of me.

BRANGAENE.

Audacious knave! How vauntest thou thyself!
Give me the ring, and then go thou thy ways
Ere Mark awake!

STRANGE JESTER.

To Queen Iseult herself
I'll give the ring; I'll give it to none else.
She shall not let me die in misery
As she hopes God will help her in her grief.

BRANGAENE (*going up the stairs*).

Thou fool, may God's damnation strike thee dead,
Thou and Lord Tristram for the night that's passed!
I will report thy words unto the Queen
That she may bid Gawain slay thee forthwith.

(BRANGAENE *disappears up the stairs; the* STRANGE JESTE
cowers motionless, his head buried in his hands. After a momen

ISEULT, *in a white night robe, comes down the stairs with* BRANGAENE. *She steps close in front of the* JESTER, *who does not move.* BRANGAENE *remains on the lowest step, leaning against the post of the bannister.*)

ISEULT.

Thou gruesome fool, art thou some bird of prey,
Some wolf that comes to feed upon my soul?
Wilt thou not go? Why liest thou in wait
Here in the dawning light like some wild beast
That stalks its quarry?

STRANGE JESTER (*looking up; heavily*).

Dearest! O Iseult!
O, dearest, fairest, sweetest one!

ISEULT.

How dar'st
Thou call me by such names? My boiling blood
Turns cold and shudders. Go!

STRANGE JESTER (*softly*).

Where can I find
A sea whose endless depths are deep enough
To drown my misery and my memories?
Where? Tell me where, and I will go.

ISEULT.

Go where
Thou wilt, so it be far away—so far
That the whole world shall sever thee and me,
And shall divide me from thy woe! My soul
Bleeds like an unheal'd wound when thou art near,
As though thou wert its murderer, and lo,
'Twill bleed to death from thy propinquity,
Thou fool! Go, go, but give me first the ring
Thou stol'st last night and which in wanton jest
Thou torest from the hand of yon dead knight.
It is Sir Tristram's ring.

STRANGE JESTER.

Ay, sweet Iseult,
The ring is his—above all other things
He values it!

ISEULT.

Enough; give me the ring;
Else shalt thou die. I'll have thee slain, I swear
As sure as I have suffered all this night

As Mary suffered at the cross of Christ.

STRANGE JESTER (*standing up*).

The ring is mine! I gave it yonder man
To cherish like his life—he died for thee
And me. I gave him, too, my soul to guard
That by this ring he might compel and bring
Thee to me in the wood tonight. Oh, 'twas
An evil hour for us both, Iseult,
When Lord Denovalin rode through the wood.
Answer me now. Wilt thou still keep thine oath?
—The oath thou swearedst unto Tristram once?

ISEULT (*fixedly*).

No vow that I have made will I forswear,
For God hath sanctioned every oath I've sworn,
And testified thereto.

STRANGE JESTER.

Then call I thee,
Iseult the Goldenhaired, in Tristram's name,
And by this ring.
(*He hands her the ring.*)

ISEULT.

Knowst thou that oath as well?
Thou risen ghost!
(*solemnly*)
O, God, here in this hand
Grown hot from resting on my throbbing heart,
I hold the ring of gold and emerald stone
By which I sware to Tristram that I'd come
When any messenger should bring this ring
As token, and should call me in his name.
Lo, thou hast called upon me; I obey!
What wishest thou, thou phantom of the past,
Whose eyes fill me with dread? What wouldst thou have,
Thou spectre of the dark?

STRANGE JESTER.

I call on thee,
Iseult, my love; I call in my distress.
O, know me now, who was thy lover once!

ISEULT.

Thou suck'st my blood!

STRANGE JESTER.

Thy blood was mine. Thy blood

Was once mine own! It was a crimson trust
Reposing in my knightly hands to keep
Irrevocably until Death. And where
Thou goest there go I; and where thou stayest,
There stay I too. So spoke thy blood—I come
To claim but what is mine.

ISEULT (*in great distress*).

What have I done
That thou recountest my past life to me,
As 'twere a mocking song? Who art thou, fool?
Who art thou? Speak! I'm knocking at thine heart
As knocks a dead man's soul outside the gates
Of Paradise! Art thou magician, fool?
Who art thou? Art thou ghost? Art thou some soul
Forever homeless for an evil deed?
Art thou some faithless lover barred from Heav'n
And Hell eternally, whose punishment
It is to wander restless through the world
Forever begging love from women's hearts?
Did God permit that thou shouldst know what none,
Save only Tristram and myself have known?
That thou shouldst know the horror of remorse
By thinking thou art Tristram, thus to make
The greater expiation for thy sins?

STRANGE JESTER.

I am a faithless lover who has loved
Most faithfully, Iseult, beloved one!

ISEULT.

Why criest thou my name unceasingly,
As scream enhungered owls, thou pallid fool?
Why starest thou at me with eyes that tears
And pain have rendered wholly pitiless?
I know naught of thy grief; I am no leech
To cure thine ill!

STRANGE JESTER.

Iseult!

ISEULT (*in growing agitation*).

Shall I shave off
My hair as thou hast done? Shall I, too, wear
A jester's parti-colored garb? Shall I
Go through the land and, howling in the streets,
Bawl out Sir Tristram's name to make the throng

Of greasy knaves laugh? Speak! Is this the cure
Thou needest for thy grief? Does Tristram mock
Me through thy ribald wit? Does he revenge
Himself upon me thus because I loved,—
Loved him before he saw Iseult, the fair
Whitehanded Queen, and gave him soul and blood?
Has he in scornful and in bitter words
Reveal'd the secret of our love to thee?
Hath he betrayed me to his new-found wife?
Art thou in league with her? Has her black hate
Devised the torture of this embassy
That, as her messenger thou may'st evoke
The phantom images of that past life
Which once I knew, but which is dead? Confess!
And I will load thee down with precious gifts,
And daily pray for thee! I'll line thy way
With slaves and honor thee as though thou wert
Of royal lineage and kingly blood!
(*She falls on her knees.*)
Release my soul before I, too, turn fool
From very horror and from dread of thee!

STRANGE JESTER (*raising her*).

Kneel not to me, Beloved One! Arise!

ISEULT (*remains a moment in his arms and then draws away shuddering*).

When Tristram called, the Heavens echoed back
A golden peal, as echoes through the land
The peal of golden bells; the world rejoiced
And from its depths sprang up sweet sounds of joy,
And with them danced my heart exultingly!
When Tristram stood beside me, all the air
Was wont to quiver with a secret bliss
That made the beasts move 'round uneasily.
The little birds sang in the dead of night
And so betrayed us! Say, who broke the bond
That knit our souls in one?

STRANGE JESTER.

'Twas Tristram broke
The bond and, faithless, took another wife!
O, see, how great the wrong he did us both!

ISEULT (*looking at him fixedly*).

I hear a raven's hollow croak; I feel

The icy emanation of a corpse
Sweep through me as thou standest by my side,
Yet thou art burning hot, thou pallid ghost!

STRANGE JESTER.

Yet many times, Iseult, hast thou embraced
This body on thy journey o'er the sea—
The purple, swinging sea across whose breast
Ran the swift course of our great happiness—
We two alone in blissful loneliness!
Oft hast thou heard this voice in the dark wood
When to the silent nightingales it spoke,
Persuading them to sing above thine head.
Like them it whispered in thy listening ears
Soft words that made a wave of passion flow,
Sweet and voluptuous through thy burning veins!
Iseult, shall I repeat those words again?
Wilt thou again go wandering through the world
With singing blood that made our hearts beat high
In perfect unison of love, like dreams
Of silent happiness?

ISEULT.

Sir Tristram's steps
Beside me made my blood soar heavenward,
And bore me up until the earth bowed down,
And bent beneath our feet like surging waves,
And carried us like ships to victory!

STRANGE JESTER.

Like ships! Ay, Ay, Iseult, 'Twas so we went!
Iseult, art thou still mindful of the day
When, hawk on fist, we galloped o'er the downs,
For Mark was with Lord Dinas at that hour?
Dost thou remember how I lifted thee
From thy good steed and placed thee on mine own,
And held thee close, while thou didst cling to me
Like some fond child?

ISEULT.

I mind me well. And he.
Bold in th' intoxication of his love,
Let go the reins, and gave his horse the spurs,
Till, like an arrow in full flight, it clave
The golden air and bore us heavenward!
How often have I dreamed of that wild ride.

And now with Iseult of the Fair White Hands
He rides, as formerly with me—!

STRANGE JESTER.

And shall
I sing to thee, Iseult the Goldenhaired,
The lay of that White-handed wife who sits
And grieves by day and night? It is the song
Sombre and sad of my great guilt. Her eyes
Are red from weeping—!

ISEULT.

Ay, and mine are red
From weeping too! Fool, Fool, why mock'st thou me?
But since thou know'st so much then tell me this:
How came it that Sir Tristram married her—
This Iseult of the Fair White Hands?

STRANGE JESTER (*slowly and painfully*).

There plays
About her mouth a silver smile; that smile
Enchanted him one lonely night. But, when,
At cold gray dawn, he heard her called Iseult
He nigh went mad with sorrow and with joy
From thinking of the real Iseult—of her,
The Goldenhaired—his own, the beautiful,
About whose mouth there plays a golden smile.
Then sick at heart, and weary of this life,
He wished to die till memories drove him here
To Cornwall, once again to see his love
Before he died and, once again to stand
Close by her side!—The rest thou knowest well.

ISEULT (*angrily*).

Ay, fool, I know the rest, and I know too
That for these black and loathsome lies of thine
There's one reward!—And that is death! I'll end
These doubts that tear my soul. If thou art he,
Sir Tristram my beloved, thou shalt live,
And in mine arms that yearn for him shalt find
A hot and passionate forgetfulness
Of cool and silver smiles beyond the sea.
If thou hast lied, no longer shalt thou dream
Throughout the night of cool and silver smiles!
(*to* BRANGAENE)
Fetch me the key that locks the kennel gate.

BRANGAENE (*horrified*).
Iseult, what wouldst thou do?
ISEULT.
Obey me, girl!
Now listen, spectre, to my words. There lives
Within these walls a hound who has become
A wild and raging beast from his great love
For Tristram, once his master. Fool, this dog
Is full as savage as a fierce white wolf
That lusts for human flesh; his food is thrust
Into his cage on sticks. Since Tristram left,
The beast has slain three guards. Would he, think'st thou,
Attack and tear Sir Tristram limb from limb,
Should Tristram chance to step within his cage?
What think'st thou of the test?
STRANGE JESTER (*rising, tall, determined and noble*).
Iseult! Iseult!
Old Husdent ever was my faithful friend.
Let me go to him now.
ISEULT (*starting back*).
Thou knowst his name—!
BRANGAENE.
I dare not go.
STRANGE JESTER.
Brangaene, have no fear.
Obey thy mistress's command. Thou needst
Not lead me to the cage! I know the way.
Give me the key!
(*He snatches the key from* BRANGAENE'S *hand and disappears with long strides behind the stairs. He is erect and proud. The two women stand looking at each other amazed and motionless,*)
BRANGAENE.
Poor fool, I pity him!
ISEULT (*breaking out passionately*).
He must not go! My God, he must not go!
Brangaene, call him back. Be quick.
THE VOICE OF THE JESTER (*joyfully*).
Husdent!
BRANGAENE.
O, hark!
ISEULT (*in increasing fear*).
His cry! His dying cry, perhaps!

Brangaene, dearest sister, what thinkst thou
Of this strange jester Tramtris?
(*The women stare at each other without speaking.*)
Wilt thou go
And look between the bars?
(BRANGAENE *goes after the* STRANGE JESTER.)
O Thou who hast
Created this great world, why didst Thou then
Create me, too?

BRANGAENE (*re-entering in great excitement*).
Iseult! O, God, Iseult!
Old Husdent's cage is empty, and the fool
With Husdent leapt the wall and they are gone!
(*She hastens to the window.*)

ISEULT.
Has he escaped the dog and fled away?

BRANGAENE.
Behold, there goes the fool, and Husdent, mad
With joy leaps howling up, and licks his face
And hands, and dances round him as he goes!

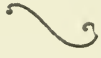
ISEULT (*jumps onto the bench before the window and waves her hand joyously*).
O, Tristram, my beloved friend! Dear fool.
Tristram, thou dearest one!.....He does not hear.....
Be quick, go call him back! Run! Run! Make haste.....
He does not turn.....he does not hear my voice.....
Go, bring him back!

BRANGAENE (*shaking the bars of the gate*).
The gate! My God, the gate!
The guards are still asleep!

ISEULT.
O, God! I die!
O, Tristram! Tristram! Tristram! See, he turns
Not back! God is unkind; He loves me not.
I'll bathe thy feet with burning tears of love,
And kiss them dry, and wipe them with my hair.
O, Tristram, Tramtris, leper, fool! Turn back.....
Turn back, beloved fool!.....He goes! He's gone.....
See how the sun shines on his jester's garb,
And makes his red cloak gleam! How grand, how tall!
See! Tristram goes back to the world again;
Forever now and will return no more!

(*She raises herself to her full height—fixedly.*)
My friend, my dear beloved friend was here,
And in the blindness of my jealousy
I knew him not.....I loved him far too much.....
(*She sinks back into* BRANGAENE'S *arm. She recovers herself with a supreme effort rises to her full height.*)
Lo, Tristram goes back to the world again
Forever and till death.....But still he's mine....
(*In complete silence and very slowly she walks off stage.*)

CURTAIN



TWO POEMS

BY MARGARET WARD

FIDES

See the green hills stretching
  Endlessly in calm sweet strength.
But they received this gentle peace
From a youth
  Of chaos.

Call these strange powers faith,
  If you will, lover—
The path to serenity,
Which love, too, may traverse.

THE SUNKEN GRAVE

An old grave heard a child once say,
"O Mother, see this sunken grave;
Alone it lies here all the day.
To fearful death it is a slave,
Unsheltered as the chill winds rave."

The grave smiled on the child above,
And thought, "A slave to dark am I?
Perhaps, but chipmunks love my breast,
Sweet herbs, content, against me rest—
At night I see the youthful love."

THE BEE IN SHAKESPEARE

By Clement A. Harris
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There are few primary pursuits among men the modern followers of which have not claimed that Shakespeare must have been of their number, so intimate is the knowledge he shows of their craft.

The greatest of dramatists mentions bees and their belongings some thirty times in his plays: do these allusions reveal him as a practical apiarist, or only as an intelligent onlooker?

Frequency of allusion is not sufficient to answer this question: the bee occupies a unique position in literature; it is mentioned more than any other insect—indeed if one may hazard a guess, more than all other *hymenoptera* put together. We must therefore subject these references to a quality test.

It will repay us if, as a preliminary, we give a moment's thought to the general condition of beekeeping in the sixteenth century as compared with our own day. For there were at least three differences bearing upon our question.

Honey was still the chief sweetening agent, though sugar was beginning to rival it, as Touchstone knew:

> For honesty coupled to beauty is to have
> honey a sauce to sugar.
> [As You Like It. 3. iii. 31]

A second difference with our own day (which might best perhaps be designated as The Age of Tinned Food) was the absence of many and great factories. Households were much more self-contained and independent. Very largely they made their own clothes, brewed their own beer; baked their own bread; and kept their own bees—this latter especially in the "Isle of Honey" as England was called in Celtic days. Hence in the days of Good Queen Bess any man, were he butcher, great lawyer, actor, or playwright, would be more likely to know how to handle a swarm than would his confréres in the present day.

But though more men proportionately knew about bees than do now, *what* they knew was much less, especially on the scientific side. The reader of the simplest Cottager's Bee-Book of recent times possesses knowledge undreamt of by the greatest Tudor expert. This is our third differential condition, and it must be borne in mind continually if injustice is not to be done.

Though glorying in brightest sunshine while foraging, bees are insistent on blackest darkness in their homes—chiefly holes in rocks and decayed trees. When possible, their entrance-holes are small, and the slightest crevice they will promptly seal up. Consequently, till the anatomical experiments of the Dutchman Jan Swammerdam about 1669, which ultimately established the sex of the bees; the observations of an American named Hornbostel in 1745, and of an unnamed French peasant in 1768, who between them discovered how wax is produced; the researches of the great German naturalist Francois Huber in 1792; and the invention of the movable frame hive by the American Congregationalist minister L. L. Langstroth, in 1851, very little indeed was known of the physical nature and *indoor* life of bees.

The ancients were unable to discover any sign of sex in bees, and for thousands of years their continuance on earth was regarded as an unfathomable mystery, and by the devout as a perpetual miracle. Thus so expert a bee-master as Shakespeare's great literary contemporary, John Lyly, says that the bees "have such a care of chastity that they never engender."

But it is not in the material world only that nature abhors a vacuum: to many, if not the majority of minds, the most fantastic solution of a mystery is better than none. And in a remote period of Egyptian history some son of the Nile propounded the extraordinary theory that if an ox was slain with a certain ritual (which came to have many variants) and buried, a swarm of bees would emerge from its horns, if the tips were cut off after decomposition! Thereby he supplied a palliative to the inquiring minds of the civilized world for decades of centuries!

And among such minds, apparently, was that of Shakespeare: for when Henry IV is distressed at the low companionships his son has formed, and Warwick seeks to comfort him by saying that the Prince will ultimately throw these undesirables off, the King expresses his still persistent doubt in the words:

> 'Tis seldom when the bee doth leave her comb
> In the dead carrion.
> [ii Henry IV 4. IV. 79]

The modern beekeeper knows that she never makes it there! If bees abhor anything it is carrion!

Hence the question arises, could any *practical* apiarist possibly hold such a theory? It would be natural to say No! But history very clearly says Yes! And in her list of believers she includes a working beekeeper of such outstanding intelligence as

Virgil! [This psychological phenomenon of high intellectualism combined with placid credulity is much too involved to discuss here, even if it were confined to beekeeping, which it certainly is not!] The passage quoted shows familiarity with current theories, but neither proves nor disproves its author's practical qualifications.

Outdoor observation, particularly of the hiving of a swarm, is quite sufficient to show that a colony of bees contains three classes of individuals, in very unequal numbers. There may be anything from 5,000 to 50,000 bees: of these the vast majority are imperfect females now known as "workers"; there may be a very varying number, say two or three hundred, larger bees who, "though not lazy, object to work between meals," now known to be males, and called "drones"; and (usually) *one* quite peculiar individual, longer, more finely shaped, and differently coloured from the rest.

In days when monarchy was practically universal, to see a parallel between such a community and a human kingdom was inevitable, and two conclusions were drawn which were as natural as they were false. The very dignified individual bee was regarded as the leader of the hive—an opinion only very recently questioned—and, though of course he "did not engender" was assumed to be of the male sex. So much were the Egyptians impressed with this dynastic arrangement, that in their hieroglyphics a bee became the symbol of kingship!

Lucius, in declaring his army of Goths to be

> Like stinging bees in hottest summer's day
> Led by their master to the flower'd fields.
> [Titus Andronicus. 5. I. 14.].

accepts both the errors just named.

He also accepts a third error which may or may not have been common at the time of the Roman wars against the Goths—the assumed period of the play. The true function of the "master" bee was unknown (it is that of laying some 3,000 eggs a day in the height of the season). It was therefore natural to suppose that "he" led the foragers out to the "flower'd fields." But close observation would have shown that this was not the case: the bees go out individually, and as the queen-bee, to use the modern term, usually leaves the hive only twice in her lifetime (firstly on her mating flight, and secondly when she goes with the first swarm of the season) she cannot have been *seen* to lead those on honey bent. The passage is much more suggestive

of the imagination of a poet than the observation of a practical beekeeper.

A just judgment is rendered all the more difficult because in another passage the fact that the "leader" remains in the hive while the foragers are afield is clearly recognised:

> When that the general is not like the hive
> To whom the foragers shall all repair,
> What honey is expected?
> [Troilus and Cressida, 1. iii. 80]

This speech of Ulysses is doubly interesting because it shows knowledge of another fact not at all likely to be within the ken of the mere onlooker. Namely, that bees will usually kill a strange queen who enters their hive, even when they are queenless; the only way in which a queen from another hive can be introduced—and that not always—is by smearing her over with honey drawn from the hive she is to be put into; or by some other of many ingenious devices whereby the "general" is made "like the hive." Nothing tests the skill of the beekeeper more than his success or otherwise in the art of "Introducing" as it is called. And Shakespeare appears to have known of this art whether he was himself a master of it or not.

Though, till recently, we humans did not know that the one long, finely shaped, and dark bee was the Mother of the Race, on whom the continued existence of the colony depended, the bees themselves knew. And on finding that they were bereft of her, they very naturally showed wild excitement, suspected every live thing near them of being the cause of their loss, and acted accordingly. No observant passer-by could fail to notice such commotion, but, even if observant, he would not be able to determine the cause of it. Shakespeare's Earl of Warwick, however, knew, and thereby proved not only possession of the expert knowledge of his own day, but that such knowledge was in advance of what, in view of contemporary biological ignorance, might have been expected at the period:

> The Commons, like an angry hive of bees
> That want their leader, scatter up and down,
> And care not whom they sting in his revenge.
> [ii. Henry VI. 3. ii. 125.]

It was not only on its apparently monarchichal character that a close similitude was seen between the economy of a hive and that of a human state. Shakespeare carries the likeness considerably further. But he was by no means the first to do so. Pliny, Plutarch, and his own contemporaries, Thomas Nasche and John

Lyle among others, had preceded him. The latter in his famous *Euphues* develops the idea at length and with much wealth of detail. So much so as to arouse a suspicion that Shakespeare is much indebted to him in his own longest passage on bees:—

.....for so work the honey-bees,
Creatures that by a rule in nature teach
The act of order to a peopled kingdom.
They have a king and officers of sorts;
Where some like magistrates, correct at home,
Others, like merchants, venture trade abroad,
Others, like soldiers, armed in their stings,
Make boot upon the summer's velvet buds;
Which pillage they with merry march bring home
To the tent-royal of their emperor:
Who, busied in his majesty, surveys
The singing masons building roofs of gold,
The civil citizens kneading up the honey,
The poor mechanic porters crowding in
Their heavy burdens at his narrow gate,
The sad-eyed justice, with his surly hum,
Delivering o'er to executors pale
The lazy yawning drone.
[Henry V. I. ii. 187.]

Technical knowledge is shown in recognizing that on summer days the population of a hive is about equally divided between the foragers and those who "correct at home"—ward off intruders; eject ailing bees; and "knead up the honey": a modern beekeeper would have said pollen, which they knead much more; and he would have added "nurse the young bees," but the crèche and its larder were not understood at the time; he would probably have alluded also to scout bees and scavengers.

His Grace of Canterbury seems to have imagined that only the foraging bees were "armed in their stings," whereas all bees are, except drones; and that they used their weapons in taking booty from the flowers, which is not the case, but this may be due to the rhetorical form of the passage rather than to critical misjudgment.

In the beautiful line:

The singing masons building roofs of gold

are we to understand that the masons sing *while* building that marvellous comb which is perhaps the greatest mathematical wonder in the whole realm of nature? If so, I am afraid that Homer nods! The loud *buzz* of a bee is produced mainly by the action of its wings, and ceases as soon as a flying bee alights on a flower. The quieter *hum* of a busy hive is believed to be produced by the vibration of a minute curtain connected with

the spiracles. Both sounds result from *action*. Now wax is produced from nectar (*i. e.* the raw material of honey) in the body of the bee, and great heat is needed for the transmutation. To generate this the bees cluster together in a dense mass, and I do not know how anybody witnessing this extremely interesting process could fail to be deeply impressed with the absolute stillness and death-like silence which prevail.

But it is much easier to account for this slip—assuming the singing and building to be simultaneous—as poetic license, than to read of "*roofs* of gold" without concluding that the Archbishop *had* seen comb in process of making, or at least *in situ*. For bees do not build upwards as we do but *downwards:* their idea of a good foundation is a firm ceiling from which to hang their home. And only one who had examined a comb critically would know this. Comb is usually yellow, but it assumes a golden colour when bees are at work on flowers which have a pollen of this hue, notably certain types of dandelion.

It must be confessed that in the reference to the foragers as "poor mechanic porters" the great Prelate betrays himself as much more of an autocrat than a bee-lover. After spending a fortnight as nurses bees are promoted first to pollen-gathering, and then as a final triumph to honey-getting, and in both works often show great pride, judgment, skill, and heroism.

The mention of the "narrow gate" and of "a platted hive of straw" in *A Lover's Complaint* (line 8) indicates only a close observer of external details. But these allusions are interesting as showing that the type of hive common in Tudor days was that straw skep or "ruskie" which was prevalent if not universal in Europe up to the time of Langstroth's epoch-making invention already mentioned—the movable-frame hive. The Romans used very similar hives but they were more pointed than the English ones (as are the Dutch ones of today) and were made of wattled osiers or of stitched bark, as Virgil tells us.

The fact that the worker-bees kill off the drones in the autumn is, and probably was, too well known for the last three lines of the quotation to be of evidential value. In the titles "king" and "emperor" we again have evidence of the universality of the contemporary assumption of the male sex of the unique member of the bee community, now known with equal unanimity as "queen."

This is perhaps the best place in which to refer to three other fallacies current in Shakespeare's day and probably long before.

Two of them have reference to the little variously-coloured pellets which the worker-bees bring home on their hind legs, and now known to be pollen, the food of the larvae, and to a less extent of the adult bees.

One theory was that they contained the germs of life, and according to some, the "actual corporeal substance" of the young bees. Moses Rushden, Bee-master to Charles II of England, in his *Further Discovery of Bees*, shows that this theory was held as late as 1679.

The alternative conception, and a very natural one, was that the pellets consisted of wax, or the substance from which the bees made it. A very similar idea is current in the present day: I have myself been told by an intelligent bee-keeper that the bees got their wax from the trees (so they do, in a way, since they make it from nectar).

This latter theory of the pellets was quite clearly held by Henry IV and Titania:

> When, like the bee.....
> Our thighs packed with wax.
> [ii Henry IV. 4. V. 77].

> The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,
> And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs
> [Midsummer-Nights' Dream. 3 I. 171].

Wax was first used for candles about the year 1300 A. D. but only the opulent could afford them. Three hundred years later they had probably become cheaper. It had been used in arts and manufactures from the earliest times; and about the year of Shakespeare's birth had first been mixed with shellac and used for seals to letters.*

Perhaps it was the novelty of this usage which makes the dramatist refer to it at the expense of an anachronism. Imogen exclaims:

> Good wax, thy leave. Bless'd be
> You bees that make these locks of counsel!
> [Cymbeline. 3. II. 35.].

Others have regarded seals in a very different light, and Jack Cade is one of them:

> Some say the bee stings: but I say 'tis the bee's wax,
> for I did but seal once to a thing, and I was never mine own man since.
> [ii. Henry VI. 4. ii. 89.].

*In themselves seals to letters were no novelty: Jezebel placed them on the letters she wrote to Ahab, 899, B. C.

The third error may be regarded as the counterpart to belief in the miraculous perpetuation of bee-life on the earth. It regarded the bees as being divinely fed, the idea being that honey was a kind of manna, specially provided by Providence: Virgil speaks of it as "heaven-born, the gift of air." The thought is so beautiful and poetic that any dramatist who held, or even knew of it, would be likely to put it into the mouth of one of his more devout characters. But Shakespeare does not do so. On the contrary he shows himself familiar with one of the most prosaic facts known, and probably known only to the practical beekeeper. This is that nectar is found not only in flowers and fruit-blossom, but in weeds (chiefly charlock, rag-weed, and thistle):

> There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
> * * * * * * * * * * * * *
> Thus may we gather honey from the weed,
> And make a moral of the devil himself.
> [Henry V. 4. I. 4].

The Plays contain two references to the famous honey of Hybla:

> *Falstaff.* And is not my hostess of the tavern a most sweet wench?
> *Prince.* As the honey of Hybla, my old lad of the castle.
> [I. Henry IV. 1. ii. 47].

> *Cassius.*
> But for your words, they rob the Hybla bees,
> And leave them honeyless.
> *Antony.*
> Not stingless too.
> *Brutus.*
> O! yes, and soundless too;
> For you have stolen their buzzing, Antony,
> And very wisely threat before you sting.
> [Julius Caesar; 5 I. 34].

But praise of the nectar from the southern slope of Mount Etna was sung by so many Latin poets that mention of it is evidence of classical rather than apiarian knowledge. And my own experience is that bees do not "threat before they sting"—they know better. Usually the first thing one knows about a stinging bee is that it has already done its work. The bee that buzzes about one's face rarely ends by stinging: it is a scout bee preparing its report.

Much more to the point than classical allusions are the two references to bees in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* and one in *Troilus and Cressida:*

> *Titania.*
> The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees.
> [M. N. D. 3 I. 171].

Bottom:

Mounsieur Cobweb, good Mounsieur, get your weapons in your hand, and kill me a redhipped humble-bee on the top of a thistle; and, good Mounsieur, bring me the honey-bag. Do not fret yourself too much in the action, and, good mounsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not: I would be loath to have you overflown with a honey-bag, signior.
[M. N. D. 4. I. 10].

Pandorus.

Full merrily the humble-bee doth sing,
Till he hath lost his honey and his sting;
And being once subdued in armed tail
Sweet honey and sweet notes together fail.
[Troilus and Cressida. 5 X. 43].

I bracket these quotations because all three refer to the *Bombidæ* or humble-bees, also known as bumble-bees, dumble-dores, and foggie-bees. Though exceedingly active, rising earlier than the *apis mellifica*, and visiting from thirty to thirty-five flowers a minute, they store very little honey, and interest in them betokens the nature-student rather than the commercial apiarist. It is rarely, however, that anyone interested in them is not also familiar with the *apis mellifica* for practical reasons.

The reference by both Titania and Bottom to the "honey-bag" (now called honey-sac) is very significant as showing an acquaintance with the internal organs of the bee which could hardly have been made save by anatomical methods. And these are easier with the *Bombidæ* than with the *apis mellifica* owing to the larger size.

Whether intentional or not, there is a special fitness in the choice of Cobweb to do the killing of the bee. For cobwebs are very often fatal to bees—so much so that no wise apiarist will allow spiders near his hives. But the reference to a "red-hipped bumble-bee" is rather puzzling, for I know none such. Probably Bottom had seen the *Bombus lapidarius* which has a red back. This is the more likely as this species is exceedingly fierce, and to kill one in midsummer without breaking the honey-sac might be no easy thing. In autumn it would not be so difficult. The *Bombidae* then begin to show signs of stupor. Very few bees of any kind die in the hive or nest: and Bottom shows much aptness in telling Cobweb where to look for his victim; for the whole family of *apidae* are fond of thistles, which in summer yield them a moderate amount of both honey and pollen and on the approach of winter afford the giant bumble-bees a downy catafalque for their last long rest.

A possible alternative interpretation is that the redness of the hip was due to the colour of the pollen, which is carried on the thigh of the third pair of legs. Dandelions yield a bright orange;

charlock a beautiful gold; and white and red clover and sainfon different shades of russet; either of which under cover of a poet's license might possibly pass muster as "red."

As Jack Cade observed, it is common knowledge that bees sting. But not everybody knows whether their weapon is in the mouth or the tail. I have known highly intelligent people dispute the point.

Those who have become sufficiently inured to stings to watch a bee as it uses its barb on one's hand, can be in no doubt about the matter. And as the third line of his little song shows, Pandarus was evidently one of these.

It is also, I think, common knowledge, though to a lesser extent, that prior to the invention of the movable-frame hive the ruinous practice was in vogue of killing the bees in autumn as a means of getting the honey (a few colonies, and these the worst, being kept to breed from the next spring). Also that "holding forth pursuing smoke" as Virgil says, was a precaution adopted in this and other manipulations. Shakespeare refers to both practices:

> Our thighs packed with wax, our mouths with honey
> We bring it to the hive, and like the bees
> Are murdered for our pains.
> [ii Henry IV. 4. V. 77].

> So bees with smoke, and doves with noisome stench
> Are from their hives and houses driven away.
> [I Henry VI. I. V. 23].

Shakespeare shows much expert knowledge; and since he would make only such allusions to bees as happened to illustrate some point in his drama, he probably knew much more than he shows. Against this knowledge we cannot put ignorance which was common to the experts of his day, nor anachronisms, which are only a literary defect. We are confined to personal errors.

Now a writer cannot draw a character intellectually above himself, for he is the ultimate author of every original thought in his book; but he can and very often does draw one of greater ignorance, especially in historical plays of a long antecedent period. Hence it does not follow that Shakespeare himself held every view which he puts into the mouth of one of his characters: it *does* follow that he was acquainted with and probably held the most advanced views which any of his *dramatis personæ* expound.

Thus in the quotation last given, Henry IV appears to think that bees carry honey in their mouths; but Bottom didn't; he evidently knew that they convey it through the gullet to the

honey-sac, and it is difficult to believe that the creator of both characters held the former view.

There remain, therefore, only *unconscious* errors. And these are almost impossible of determination. Had I to make a guess myself—and it would be nothing but a guess—my selection would be "singing masons," "kneading up the honey," and "Threat before you sting." And they are all of them the kind of "nod" of which an apiarian Homer might be guilty.

My own opinion is that Shakespeare was either a practical beekeeper himself or extremely intimate with somebody who was. And though I do not remember noticing bee-hives at either Shakespeare's own house at Stratford, or at Ann Hathaway's cottage, when I several times visited them in boyhood, the latter especially is one of those thatched dwellings which in the "Isle of Honey" it is almost impossible to imagine without them.

SNOW LEGEND

By August W. Derleth

This way meadow mice went
burrowing under snow.
Fragile the prints where quail spent
an hour or so,
ate of these seeds and talked;
and down along the water's edge
frail hand-tracks where opossum walked.
Yonder on the shadowed ledge
a barred owl spent a day or two
and fed himself one night
upon a careless hare. Scarce a new
mark overlying, but the fleet, light
footsteps where a fox ran last. They come and go,
hunger, fear and death patterned in the snow.

THE BULLIES

A One Act Play By Javier de Burgos*

Translated from the Spanish by Willis Knapp Jones

The Characters

Isidro, *innkeeper*
Nemesia, *his wife*
Paca, *their daughter*
Perico, *nephew, in love with Paca*
Gotico, *an actor*
The Alligator } *Bullies*
Pugnose }
Ambrosio }
Tiruliqui, *the waiter*
First Man
Second Man
Other men and women, *patrons of the Inn*

As originally written there are two scenes, the first a corridor inside an inn on the outskirts of Madrid, the second the taproom. However, with the change of only a few speeches the whole play can be set in the taproom. The time is the year in which the play was written, 1886.

(*Enter* Nemesia *and* Isidro. *The woman is about forty-five, the man sixty, serious and self-satisfied. He talks slowly and sententiously. As the curtain rises,* Isidro *stands in the center of the stage, his hands in his coat pockets, listening to* Nemesia *whose anger is rising little by little.*)

Isidro. Well, now, since you've got me here and willing to listen, go ahead.

Nemesia. Isidro, the day's come when I start bossing things around here. Yes, you hear what I say. It weighs on

*Francisco Javier de Burgos y Sarragoiti (1842-1902) came at the height of popularity of the *genero chico*, or hour-long Spanish play. Some sixty-five to seventy plays were written by him, either alone or in collaboration with the most famous dramatists of Spain. His three greatest are *Cadiz*, *Las Mujeres*(The Women) and the present play, *Los Valientes* whose first performance, August 14, 1886, was such a success that people in the street, mistaking the enthusiasm, turned in a riot call and brought the police on the scene.

my conscience when things are going as they are. How can I keep calm, when I see you acting foolish. You don't pay no more attention to business than a corpse would. If we keep on this way we'll soon be broke and our hotel'll lose its reputation.

ISIDRO (*calmly*). What's that you're saying?

NEMESIA. And I'm to blame because I'm so easy going. Knowing what sort of man you are, I didn't take it into account in running an establishment like this; and I had the fine idea of putting the few dollars that were left into this business. But I won't put up with any more. You have a marriageable daughter and an honorable wife, and it is not right for them to be laughed at because of your goings on.

ISIDRO. Who laughs at you?

NEMESIA. Everybody. Do you mean to tell me that any self-respecting person comes to this inn to buy a bottle of wine, seeing the kind of people that hang around?

ISIDRO. Look here, if you weren't the sort of woman you are, and if I weren't the kind of man I am, if I didn't look out for what has to be looked out for, Nemesia, because—one has to look out for everything—listen, I would have got angry just now. The people who come to my inn are the cream of Madrid.

NEMESIA. Cream of the bums, maybe. I'd call that sour cream.

ISIDRO. What's that?

NEMESIA. Just what I said.

ISIDRO. It looks to me as if you're spoiling for a fight.

NEMESIA. I'm ready for anything.

ISIDRO. Then just remember, Nemesia, who I am.

NEMESIA. It's all the same to me what you are.

ISIDRO. You listen, you, see!

NEMESIA (*shouting angrily*).—I tell you I won't shut up.

ISIDRO. Woman, show some delicacy—and some other things. (*Aside*) I've never seen her like this before in my life.

NEMESIA. Will you tell me what kind of business you've had ever since you opened the doors of this damned inn?—scandals and fights. Just you tell me what you've gained looking after this band of jailbirds . . .

ISIDRO. Fine fellows.

NEMESIA. Have it your own way.

ISIDRO. Well, there's a difference. The people who come into my inn are the best of the good sports, the brave bullies of Spain. And such beauties never pull any dirty stuff.

NEMESIA. Well, then, why do they quarrel and insult each other, and fight and are always killing each other?

ISIDRO. Because their veins run blood instead of lemonade.

NEMESIA. But don't you see how it harms you to bring them to your hotel?

ISIDRO. Nemesia, I don't bring them; they come looking for me.

NEMESIA. And why, you fool?

ISIDRO. So that Mr. Isidro, whom all the brave lads in the world respect, may give each one what he deserves.

NEMESIA. Well, you're the biggest fool I ever saw. They only come because you invite them in, and so they can squeeze money out of you. You pay the bill for the whole lot. That's why they come! (*Angrily*) When in the world were *you* ever a sport, or anything else?

ISIDRO. Nemesia, don't harp on that point or I'll do something I'll be sorry for. (*With comic gravity*) When I led you to the thalamus—

NEMESIA. The what?

ISIDRO. I mean the church—my fame was universal, and over the wide face of the earth I was known—

NEMESIA. As a fool.

ISIDRO. I? (*Angrily, but calming himself at once*). Very well, you score.

NEMESIA. Now listen.

ISIDRO. I shall listen to no more.

NEMESIA. The fact is, things can't go on as they are.

ISIDRO (*hestitating an instant before leaving*). If one were not careful, that would be a thing to get angry about. (*Exit* ISIDRO.)

NEMESIS. Isidro! Isidro! He's gone. (*In a tone of warning*) Well, whether you like it or not, from today on I swear this house is going to be run differently. (*Enter* PACA, *left.*)

PACA. Mama.

NEMESIA. Come in, Paca.

PACA. Has father gone away?

NEMESIA. As soon as he saw I was serious, he took French leave.

PACA (*surprised*). What's that? Do you mean to tell me you really dared tell him—

NEMESIA. Not all I wanted to, but I made him swallow a couple.

PACA. And there I was, frightened to death.

NEMESIA. Why?

PACA. Because I know that my father is a wild animal.

NEMESIA. Paca, your father—well, what he is, is a man with too much tongue, and he doesn't put anything over on me with his blustering and his tricks.

PACA. I hope you didn't say anything to him about Perico, did you?

NEMESIA. I'll say that later.

PACA. Mother, for Heaven's sake! Don't you see that as soon as he knows that Perico is my sweetheart—

NEMESIA. What about it?

PACA. He'll raise the roof.

NEMESIA. He will, eh?

PACA. I'm scared to death.

NEMESIA. A fine time to come out with that! So now after you have me worried to death with your groans and lamentations and saying all the time that your trouble will be the end of you, this is what happens! Is it right for you to treat the kind of boy your cousin is in the same way your father does?

PACA. And all for what? Because he's good natured and is easy going and dislikes quarrels? All men don't have to be bruisers because my father likes plug-uglies?

NEMESIA. Of course not!

PACA. And when the poor fellow comes here he's scared to death by the way father insults him.

NEMESIA. Well, I promise you things are going to be different. (*Enter* PERICO *at the right. He is a young workman some twenty years old, with cap and blue blouse tucked up under his coat. He looks in, in a frightened way.*)

PERICO. Can I come in, Auntie?

NEMESIA (*to* PACA). Speak of the devil . . .

PACA (*happily*). Perico!

PERICO. Dear little Paca.

NEMESIA. Come in. We're alone.

PERICO (*advancing in fear*). I'm scared whenever I come here. I saw Uncle Isidro leave the tavern, but as he did not see me—I said to myself, I'm going to stop in and say hello to the ladies.

NEMESIA. That's right. I was just talking with Paca, here, about you.

PERICO. About me?

PACA. Perico, my mother intends to speak out to your Uncle and tell him about you and me.

PERICO. God almighty! Don't do that, Aunt Nemesia.

PACA. There, you see, Mama.

PERICO. Good Heavens. If your father finds out that we're engaged, he'll kill us.

NEMESIA. Kill nothing!

PERICO. He'll skin us.

PACA. That's what I say.

PERICO. Suppose he forbids my coming here!

NEMESIA. Well, he's going to know everything about it.

PERICO (*starting right, in great terror*). Auntie, if you tell him, I'll leave and I won't come back, ever.

PACA (*running toward her*). Perico, Perico!

NEMESIA. You're a fine pair. (*To* PERICO) Well. You sure deserve to be called "coward" and "yellow."

PACA. Mother!

NEMESIA. And what proves it is that the love you say you feel for Paca isn't worth a rap.

PERICO (*turning hurt*). Oh, come, Auntie.

NEMESIA. I mean that you don't love her as you say.

PERICO. Do you hear that, Paca? Do you doubt that I love you?

PACA. No, never!

PERICO (*regretfully*). Just to suggest I don't is an insult.

NEMESIA. Are you going to cry about it?

PERICO (*sobbing*). Haven't I got a right to cry, Aunt Nemesia? You tell me that—me who thinks of nothing but her.

PACA (*crying too, and trying to console him*). Perico! Dear Perico!

NEMESIA. The butter melted that time!

PACA. Don't pay any attention to my mother.

NEMESIA (*to* PERICO). Aren't you ashamed to cry like that?

PERICO. No, I feel some things.

PACA. Of course he does.

NEMESIA. Who'd have thought it!

PERICO. Auntie!

NEMESIA. I'm convinced you're madly in love with each other.

PACA } We certainly are.
PERICO }

NEMESIA. Then we've got to settle on something.

PERICO (*after reflecting a moment*). Listen, it'll be hard for me, but—I'm going to venture. Does my uncle know that the printers have raised my salary?

NEMESIA. No.

PERICO. If I should go to see him as if I were telling him the news—

NEMESIA. That's a fine idea!

PERICO. Do you think he'd be glad?

NEMESIA. Sure.

PERICO (*making gesture of punching*). And what if he hits me—

NEMESIA. Perico, don't be an ass. Come, don't wear that hangdog expression. You understand. Be bold, impudent, dashing. (*Pause*)

PERICO. Shall I, Paca?

PACA. Go ahead. (*Enter* TIRULIQUI *hastily and in fright, at the right. He is about eighteen and dressed like a waiter in a Madrid tavern.*)

TIRULIQUI. Madame Nemesia!

NEMESIA. What's the matter, Tiruliqui?

TIRULIQUI. Where's the boss?

NEMESIA. Didn't he go out through the tavern?

TIRULIQUI. Yes, he went out to the street, but he sometimes comes in the back door. (*Pointing left.*)

NEMESIA. Well, he didn't!

TIRULIQUI. He's left us in a mess.

NEMESIA. What's happening? (PACA *and* PERICO *listen attentively, showing alarm.*)

TIRULIQUI. It looks to me like a rumpus was about to cut loose.

NEMESIA. Why?

TIRULIQUI. I'm afraid of trouble. Do you know Ambrosio, the Wolf?

NEMESIA. Damn him!

TIRULIQUI. Well, he was there and now who comes along but Pugnose of Cartagena, who is tough, and they're cursing each other and if they start mixing it . . .

NEMESIA (*angrily*). It's a pity they wouldn't, and chew each other up.

TIRULIQUI. I don't know what to do. I hope to God the boss comes quick. (*He runs off, right.*)

NEMESIA. Do you hear that? (*To* PACA) Every day

we've got to have rows. This tavern'll be the end of us. (*Outside can be heard a great uproar of shouting, falling furniture and breaking glass.*)

PERICO (*terrified*). The fight's started.

PACA. Holy Mary!

PERICO. They're killing each other.

NEMESIA (*angrily*). If I were the boss around here—Let's see if we can find a couple of policemen! (*She goes out left, followed by* PACA *and* PERICO, *who show great terror.*)

SCENE II.

When the curtain rises, the position of the actors gives a perfect tableau, such are their immovable postures. In the foreground AMBROSIO *and* PUGNOSE, *exaggerated types of bullies, glare angrily at each other and are poised to attack, armed with clasp knives. Between them, trying to keep peace are two men. Surrounding the group and near the counter are some men and women of the town, expressing curiosity, astonishment, and fear. Toward the center in the middle ground is* TIRULIQUI, *very frightened. At the right, hiding behind a table on which is a glass of red wine, is* GOTICO, *a theatrical utility man, on hands and knees, and protecting himself with a chair leaning against the table. Scattered over the floor are tables, chairs, and bottles, the result of the first skirmish of the fighters.*

FIRST MAN. Come on, now, that's all over. The braver the man the safer he should play.

SECOND MAN (*to* PUGNOSE). Nothing to it. Just a couple of quick words misunderstood.

AMBROSIO (*without moving, and with calmness and irony*). You'll get what you 're looking for. What do you want to come making a fuss before people for . . .

PUGNOSE (*in same tones*). I said I'd hit you, and—I hit you.

AMBROSIO (*with forced smile*). Me?

PUGNOSE. Yes.

AMBROSIO. Where?

PUGNOSE (*slapping* AMBROSIO'S *cheek*). There. (*After a brief pause* AMBROSIO *leaps toward* PUGNOSE *who does the same but the two men hold them apart. There is a brief instant of confusion and shouting. Finally the bullies return to their first positions.* GOTICO, *without moving from his place, gasps, but finally seizes his glass of wine.*)

ALL. Oh!

First Man (*to* Ambrosio). By the nails of Christ—

Gotico (*aside*). I'll bet I won't be able to drink this glass of wine in peace.

Isidro (*entering left*). What's this? What's happening in my house?

Tiruliqui (*happily*). Here's the boss!

Gotico. Hurry—here comes the boss. He'll stop the row.

Isidro (*comes forward authoritatively and addresses the fighters. The others draw back.*) Well, Ambrosio!

Ambrosio (*annoyed*). Well, Isidro—

Isidro. Is this the way to behave in my inn, Pug?

Pugnose (*bending his head*). Well, Isidro, well . . .

Isidro (*slowly and seriously*). Two high grade fellows, two brave men, worthy and honorable, noble and genteel, act this way? (*To the others*) Good friends, keep on drinking and talking. The row is over.

Pugnose. But, Isidro—

Isidro. And what do you say to putting up those stick pins of yours? (*They replace the knives, still looking carefully at each other.*)

First Man (*calling* Tiruliqui). Boy, bring two bottles, and hurry up about it. It's getting late.

Isidro (*approaching first man*). Are you leaving?

First Man. Yes, sir, we're from the country. We dropped in to buy a drink, but when those two fellows started fighting (*pointing to* Ambrosio *and* Pugnose)—

Isidro (*in a whisper*). They're the most famous bullies in Spain.

First Man. Those fellows?

Isidro. Two lions.

First Man. Then how were they tamed so quickly?

Isidro (*with forced smile*). Are you joking? (*Changing his tone*) Is anybody trying to get funny with me?

First Man. What do you mean?

Isidro. That I'm Isidro of Maragateria (*making a gesture as if that explained everything.*)

First (*not understanding*). Oh, yes, of course. Quite!

Isidro. Tiruliqui!

Tiruliqui (*from the counter where men and women are buying bottles of wine*). Sir?

Isidro. Don't collect a penny from those people.

Tiru. Very well.

ALL. What's that?

ISIDRO. The drinks are on the house.

ALL. Thank you! Thanks.

ISIDRO (*telling them goodbye*). Drink to my health!

FIRST (*to the others*). What a man!

(*Men and women go out left, happily, carrying bottles and bowing to* ISIDRO *who goes to the door with them.* AMBROSIO *and* PUGNOSE *have not changed their positions.* GOTICO, *seated at a table to the right, watches everything. During the conversation,* TIRULIOUI *goes about fixing up the room, then retires behind the bar where he busies himself cleaning trays, filling bottles, etc.*)

GOTICO (*aside, with his elbows on the table, and his head in his hands*). Well, sir, if what I've seen since I started living across the street and coming to this tavern is true, here's the big chance for this down and out actor.

ISIDRO (*going down stage and beckoning to* PUGNOSE *and* AMBROSIO *who come up, one on either side*). Gentlemen, a couple of words with you and let me know what happened before you tried to kill each other, if circumstances make that necessary.

GOTICO. I'll bet he'll buy the drinks.

ISIDRO. Tiruliqui, bring three glasses.

GOTICO (*aside*). What did I tell you? Sure. Now I'm wise to this fellow. But I mustn't pull a bone play. Let's see what they're going to say.

ISIDRO (*to* PUGNOSE, *after clinking glasses with him and* AMBROSIO). All right; now—So you came from Cartagena to bulldose the boys and because you got into a hot spot you start a fight without thinking of the other fellows in the same fix. Is that it?

PUGNOSE. Well, when a man's desperate—

ISIDRO. That's when he ought to keep his lamps bright (*pointing to his right eye with his finger.*)

AMBROSIO. Sure.

ISIDRO. And keep his head and take particular care what he's about.

AMBROSIO. Yes, sure. (*A pause.*)

ISIDRO. Really, I see no reason for your quarreling.

AMBROSIO. You don't?

ISIDRO. No! (*To* PUGNOSE). Pug, how much do you need?

PUGNOSE. A couple of tens would fix me.

ISIDRO. (*Takes out a purse and gives him bankbills*). Here you are.

GOTICO (*aside*). Generous! I'll say! I mean, twenty dollar-ish.

PUGNOSE. Thanks.

AMBROSIO. While you're about it, I'll just . . .

ISIDRO. Do you need something?

AMBROSIO. Just ten to square a debt.

GOTICO. What a pair of birds!

ISIDRO. Here, you are (*gives him ten dollars.*)

AMBROSIO. Thanks.

ISIDRO. When good fellows come to this inn, they're looked after and helped. (PUGNOSE *and* AMBROSIO *shake hands before* ISIDRO.)

PUGNOSE. We make up, Ambrosio.

AMBROSIO. You're O. K. with me, Pug. (*They shake hands, calling to* TIRULIQUI *to bring them wine.*)

ISIDRO (*to* TIRULIQUI). Another of the same.

GOTICO (*aside*). If I could only be a tough guy for just fifteen minutes!

PUGNOSE. Tell me, Isidro, is Paco the Alligator still hanging round Madrid?

ISIDRO. I don't know. He pulls his stuff down the other end of the town. I kicked him out of here.

PUGNOSE. He's quick with his knife.

AMBROSIO. He's bad, that boy is.

PUGNOSE. Is he so tough?

ISIDRO. He sure is.

GOTICO (*aside*). And to think people call these bums bad men!

PUGNOSE. That reminds me, Isidro, we haven't talked about the toughest guy of all. What do they say around Madrid about that baby from Havana?

ISIDRO (*emphatically*). You mean Tornado?

GOTICO (*aside*). What a name!

ISIDRO. The boys have got their eyes on him. He's got the goods.

PUGNOSE. So they say. They tell me he's bad news.

ISIDRO. I've seen letters that prove it's all so.

AMBROSIO. They tell me he's as brave as they make 'em.

ISIDRO. Best man with a knife I ever saw; and quick as a cat.

PUGNOSE. Supposing he came here?

ISIDRO. You'd have to say "uncle."

PUGNOSE. Who? I?

AMBROSIO. Yes, you. Man to man—

ISIDRO. He'd handle four men.

PUGNOSE. Why not forty, while you're at it?

ISIDRO. Don't be foolish, Pug. Tornado is a bad man. He cleans up wherever he goes. There's nobody can stand up to him. He's buried plenty—he'd just as soon fight ten men as two.

GOTICO (*aside*). My God!

PUGNOSE. He does, does he? Who's seen him?

ISIDRO. Plenty have. A year ago he was set upon by seven peasants in Cuba who jumped him and in ten minutes he gutted the seven of them.

PUGNOSE. And what about him?

ISIDRO. Not a scratch.

GOTICO (*aside*). That's the way to handle 'em.

ISIDRO. Then in Matanzas three big mulattos tackled him and he dropped the three of 'em. That man's—

GOTICO (*aside*). Asiatic yellow fever!

PUGNOSE. That's enough. He's a bull pup.

AMBROSIO. Oh, yeah!

ISIDRO. Say, I should like to know him and get acquainted with him! I sure would!

GOTICO (*aside*). I'd give a couple of fingers to be called Tornado. These fellows sure are leary of him.

PUGNOSE. He must be a whale of a man.

ISIDRO. You're all wet. Juan Luz, The Tornado, is, as I get it, just average size.

GOTICO (*aside*). Like me.

ISIDRO. And he's very thin.

GOTICO (*aside*). Like me.

ISIDRO. Clean shaven.

GOTICO (*aside*). Like me—when I wash. Just like me. (*Suddenly and making a movement as if a great idea had struck him*) God almighty! What an idea! What an inspiration! I've played worse parts in the theatre. You bet! The trouble is that if one of these bums recognizes me—well, Steve Brody took a chance; I might as well. I've got that costume I wore at Almagro in the *Passion Flower*—if I could fool them just once and grab their money and hop the train—Well, Gotico, old man, take a chance and you may be sitting pretty. (*He ponders a moment and after showing that he has made up his mind, he claps his hands to call the*

servant. TIRULIQUI *approaches.* GOTICO *changes his voice anh speaks without looking at* TIRULIQUI.)

GOTICO. What's the damage?

TIRU. Fifteen cents.

GOTICO (*He pays and goes out quickly, hiding his face*). S'long.

TIRULIQUI Well, he's a sketch! (*He takes up* GOTICO's *glass and returns to the bar where he busies himself about his tasks.*)

PUGNOSE (*gets up*). Well, sir, if what you say's so, he's this world's A-1 hard guy.

ISIDRO (*also getting up*). Hold on. Aren't you spreading it too thick?

PUGNOSE. Why?

ISIDRO. There's other guys've done all that Tornado's done and then some.

PUGNOSE. Who?

ISIDRO (*striking his breast*). Mr. Isidro of Maragateria. I've done plenty, plenty! Thirty some years ago, wherever I showed my face and drew this (*gestures as though drawing his knife*) I was boss of the dough, of the girls, of everything, and it's all down in print too.

PUGNOSE (*shaking hands*). Atta boy!

AMBROSIO (*shaking hands*). You're regular, you are!

ISIDRO. That's the kind of guy I am, and what's coming my way, I get. (*Enter* PERICO *left.*)

PERICO. There he is. (*Drawing near*) Howdy, Uncle Isidro.

ISIDRO. Who are you? (*Aside*) It's that fool of a nephew!

PERICO (*timidly*). Glad to see you.

ISIDRO. O. K.

PERICO. And how's Auntie—and the little cousin?

ISIDRO. They're makin' out all right.

PERICO. Glad to know it.

ISIDRO (*crossly*). What brings you round here?

PERICO. Me? Nothing. I was just passing by, so I thought I'd drop in.

ISIDRO (*aside*). I wonder whether you'll get by.

PUGNOSE. The fellow's crazy.

AMBROSIO. He looks dumb.

ISIDRO (*aside*). I can't understand how a boob like this can have my blood in his veins.

PERICO. Uncle Isidro—if I've bothered you—I was just going by—

ISIDRO. Yes, go by and good bye, and go get some guts.

PERICO. I was going—

ISIDRO. Well, keep on going.

PUGNOSE AND AMBROSIO. Ha, ha.

PERICO (*going away ashamed*). I ought to be crowned. What will Paca say? (*As he says this, facing the audience and near the door, the* ALLIGATOR, *a bully, comes in and bumps him.*)

ALLIGATOR (*pushing* PERICO) Why don't you look where you're going, you half-portion? (*Exit* PERICO *frightened.* ISIDRO, AMBROSIO *and* PUGNOSE *get up quickly when they see the* ALLIGATOR.)

AMBROSIO AND PUGNOSE. Alligator!

ISIDRO (*aside*). Well, this fellow's looking for trouble. (*Aloud*) Hello, Paco, are you here? Boy, (*To* TIRULIQUI) bring four glasses, and jump to it!

ALLIGATOR. Ha, ha! (*Laughter forced and quickly checked.*) Sort of surprised to see me here?

ISIDRO. Say, are you kidding? I'm glad to see you.

ALLIGATOR. Ha, ha!

AMBROSIO (*rapidly to* PUG). We'd better watch out.

ALLIGATOR. Hello, Ambrosio!

AMBROSIO. Howdy, Alligator.

ALLIGATOR (*to* ISIDRO, *referring to* PUGNOSE). Who's he?

ISIDRO (*introducing them*). Pugnose of Cartagena.

ALLIGATOR. Ha, ha.

PUGNOSE. Man, that laugh gripes me!

ISIDRO (*calling to* TIRULIQUI *who is hidden back of the counter*). Tiruliqui—don't you hear me? What the hell are you doing? (*He approaches the counter and* TIRULIQUI *sticks his head up*).

TIRULIQUI. I was setting a mouse trap near this table to see whether I couldn't catch the rat that chaws up my shoes and all my clothes.

ISIDRO. Now watch out. Catch all the rats you want to, but let's see you hop to it and bring us a drink. Sit down, gentlemen. (TIRULIQUI *serves them.*)

ALLIGATOR (*sitting down*). Thanks. (*Sarcastically*) You two can sit down, too. It's O. K. with me.

AMBROSIO AND PUGNOSE. Say!

ALLIGATOR. Oh, all right—ha, ha!

ISIDRO. Alligator's gettin' funny, that's all. (*Aside to* ALLIGATOR) Did you come here lookin' for trouble?

ALLIGATOR (*To* ISIDRO). No, I came to—the bulls grabbed my stuff and I got to have a hundred pesos.

ISIDRO. Well, you won't get another cent from me.

ALLIGATOR. Ha, ha. We'll see!

ISIDRO. I don't know why I don't bust you one and—

ALLIGATOR (*mockingly*). So this runt's the real Pugnose who's pulled so much!

PUGNOSE. Boy, when there's a job to do—I do it.

ALLIGATOR. Ha, ha! Well, say, you've got another think coming.

PUGNOSE. Is that so!

AMBROSIO. Say, Alligator.

ALLIGATOR (*in surprised tone*). I am talking, so shut up.

ISIDRO. Say, Alligator!

ALLIGATOR (*aside to* ISIDRO). Boy, I'll just kill him.

AMBROSIO (*aside to* PUG). You'd better pull your knife just in case . . .

PUGNOSE. Thanks. (*He pulls his knife and slips it up his sleeve.*)

ALLIGATOR. They told me today that the toughest guy in the world was in Madrid. Ha, Ha! And I said, "I guess Tornado must have come," and it was only little you!

PUGNOSE. Yes, sir, Mr. Lizard, or Alligator, and I step on any snakes that try to bite me.

ALLIGATOR (*calmly*). That's a lie.

PUGNOSE (*getting up*). Say!

ALLIGATOR. Sit down, man, and listen to me—(PUGNOSE *sits down.*) What you say's a lie.

ISIDRO. Shut up, will you?

ALLIGATOR. I will not.

PUGNOSE. Say, Isidro, they're getting fresh with me.

ALLIGATOR. That isn't all.

PUGNOSE (*getting up*). Well, you've said plenty for me.

ALLIGATOR. All right (*gets up*) if you're spoiling for a fight—

ISIDRO (*shouting and preventing the two who are about to fight*). Here, hold on! (*Aside to* ALLIGATOR) I'll give you the hundred dollars.

ALLIGATOR. O. K.

ISIDRO. Alligator—

ALLIGATOR. What do you want?

ISIDRO. Sit down, and you. too, Pug. I'll talk and you listen, and then you can bust each other if you want to.

ALLIGATOR (*sitting down*). You're the boss.

PUGNOSE (*sitting down*). Same here.

AMBROSIO (*the last to sit down*). 'Taint right; they ought to have killed each other.

ALLIGATOR (*to* TIRULIQUI). Bring some wine.

ISIDRO. I'll do the buying. Boy, bring four glasses. (*Enter* GOTICO, *left, in the costume of a Cuban volunteer, and with a straw hat. He pauses.*)

GOTICO (*aside*). Well, zero hour! I wonder how it will come out. What a jam! (*Aloud, in a very marked Cuban accent, he speaks to* TURULIQUI.) Does Isidro of Maragateria live here?

ISIDRO. Who are you?

GOTICO (*slowly coming in*). You heard me.

ISIDRO (*getting up*). Make yourself at home.

GOTICO. Shake.

ISIDRO. How are you?

GOTICO. First class.

ISIDRO. But who are you?

GOTICO. Jesus Christ! don't you know me?

ISIDRO. No.

GOTICO. Aw, quit your kidding! I am the Tornado! (*Stressing the word. They back away, still watching him.*)

ISIDRO. Are you Juan Luz?

GOTICO. You said it! Shake. (*They shake hands, he squeezes* ISIDRO'S *hand.*)

ISIDRO. Ouch!

GOTICO. Grab a hold, man!

AMBROSIO (*apart to* PUGNOSE *and* ALLIGATOR). It's him!

ISIDRO. What a surprise! When did you get here?

GOTICO. I landed at Santander three days ago and got to Madrid today.

ISIDRO. Glad to see you!

GOTICO. Well, boy, I wanted to meet *you*.

ISIDRO. Same here! I was telling about you just now!

GOTICO. Back there in Cuba there was an Andalusian that I bumped off who was always telling me about your place. But he was no good.

ALLIGATOR (*aside*). He killed the fellow!

ISIDRO. When I was young,—I'm an old man now—

GOTICO. You're O. K. an' fat as a hog.

ISIDRO. Well, yes, but—(*Changing his tone.*) Well, well, come and sit down and have a drink. Make yourself at home.

GOTICO. Thanks. I'm glad to meet you, because they won't look for me here.

ISIDRO. What? Somebody looking for you?

GOTICO. I don't know, but when I got here today I had an argument with four soldiers and I tapped claret four times, and when I stick a man—

ISIDRO. Oh, my God!

PUGNOSE. What a man!

AMBROSIO (*to* ALLIGATOR). Did you get that?

GOTICO (*aside*). I've got them on the go. Gotico, here's where you've got to lay it on. (*As he turns, he pretends to see* AMBROSIO, PUGNOSE, *and* ALLIGATOR *for the first time as they have been at the right, gesticulating and making signs of pretended boldness. Aside*) Here's where they attack me. (*To* ISIDRO) Say, what kind of birds are those? (*The three show anger, but check themselves.*)

ALL THREE. Huh?

GOTICO (*aside*). The coin's flipped—I'm in for it.

ISIDRO. Mr. Tornado! (*Aside*) What a man!

AMBROSIO (*retreating and whispering to the others*). We got to keep cool.

PUGNOSE. Sure.

ALLIGATOR. You bet.

GOTICO. Didn't they hear me? (*Drawing himself up.*) I said—

ISIDRO. Yes, man, yes. They're wise. Come on, sit down and rest your feet.

GOTICO. Who said I was tired?

ISIDRO. Have a drink.

GOTICO. Got any molasses brandy?

ISIDRO. I've got some pretty fair rum. Bring us some rum, Tiruliqui.

GOTICO (*with a sidelong glance at them*). I guess I've got them scared.

PUGNOSE (*unable to contain himself and advancing*). I'll be damned if I'll stand for any more of his lip.

GOTICO (*ready to fight*). What's *your* trouble?

PUGNOSE (*not daring to fight, signals to* TIRULIQUI). I'm just after some rum.

GOTICO. Oh. (*He takes a glass, tastes it, spits it out, and*

throws the glass at TIRULIQUI, *without hitting him.*) Ogh! You fat head! Damn you! Is that rum? Are you trying to slip something over on me, Mr. Maragateria?

ISIDRO. I'm sorry. (*Aside*) If I live till night it'll be a miracle.

ALLIGATOR (*aside and decidedly*). Here's where I show up that bum!

GOTICO (*aside, seeing* ALLIGATOR *approach*). God, he's going to beat me up! (*Both show terror before speaking.*)

ALLIGATOR. See here, man, men like you who are good for something and—pardon me—respect men who are regular guys—more or less—and I—

GOTICO (*aside*). Here goes my ace. (*He draws himself up and grimaces and gesticulates so that* ALLIGATOR *draws back.*) Abracadabra!

ALL THREE (*drawing back*). Huh?

GOTICO. What's that, you toad? (*to* ISIDRO) What do you think of me? (*angrily and louder and louder*) Why don't you say something?

ISIDRO. I?

GOTICO. Do you mean to tell me these three babies think they're tough? Caramba! (*Furious*) When I'm around (*to* TIRULIQUI) close the door, boy. We'll just see about this. (*The three draw back frightened, taking out their knives.*)

ALLIGATOR (*to others*). Might as well die with our boots on.

GOTICO (*aside*). They're pulling their hardware. It's all up now.

ISIDRO. He's tough, he is. He's a bear cat.

GOTICO. If I don't get their goat now, I'm cooked. (*He draws out a huge machete which he has kept concealed. And says with a voice of thunder and a ferocious expression*) Get out of the way for the yellow fever.

ALLIGATOR (*overcome with fright and fleeing*). Yellow fever!

PUGNOSE AND AMBROSIO. Let's get out of here. (*They flee around the room, chased by* GOTICO.)

GOTICO. You yellow bums! Stand up to it! (*They escape out of the door, left. He follows.*)

ISIDRO. He's a whirlwind with some thunder and lightning thrown in. He's got the nerve all right, all right! (*Enter* PACA *right.*)

PACA. What's the row? What's up, dad?

ISIDRO. Nothing, go back to your room.

PACA. But—

GOTICO (*entering with a laugh*). Ha, ha. They're travelling so fast, Isidro, a greyhound couldn't catch 'em.

ISIDRO (*embracing him*). Tornado—you're a fine man. Shake. You're one swell fellow.

GOTICO. Sure I am! (*aside*) If I don't touch him for a couple of hundred dollars—(*He sees* PACA.) Say! Who's the little bunch of sweetness?

ISIDRO. That's my little girl.

GOTICO (*going up to her, she drops her head coyly*). What a pippin. Man, God was good to you.

PACA. If you'll excuse me, I'll be going. (*She goes out quickly.* GOTICO *follows her as far as the door.*)

GOTICO. Listen, cutie! (*To* ISIDRO) She's a peach! God almighty! What a face! What a shape! She's got me going.

ISIDRO (*aside*). Here's a son-in-law for me, made to order. (*To* GOTICO) Does she look good to you?

GOTICO. What do you think?

ISIDRO. Well, I was just thinking . . . Are you married?

GOTICO. Not a chance.

ISIDRO. Well, look here, I'll tell you, I like you.

GOTICO. What?

ISIDRO. Are you are a straight shooter?

GOTICO. Sure, I am.

ISIDRO. And she's not married, and I've five thousand dollars in the bank. She gets that when she marries.

GOTICO. Hell!

ISIDRO. And if she likes you and you like her—

GOTICO. Hold on, Isidro. (*aside*) Here's a mess!

ISIDRO. Come to dinner with us.

GOTICO. All right, but—

ISIDRO. You'll love her when you two get acquainted.

GOTICO (*aside*). I'd better borrow the money before I get in too deep.

ISIDRO (*aside*). Say, it's luck to pick up a son-in-law like him! (*Enter* PERICO *with decision.*)

PERICO. I'll be brave. Uncle Isidro!

ISIDRO. You here again? What do you want? Didn't I tell you to get out?

PERICO. Yes, but—

ISIDRO (*angrily*). Get out of here.

PERICO. But I'm bringing you good news. I'll go in a minute.

ISIDRO. Well, what is it?

PERICO. They've made me a clerk in the printing office at a dollar a day! Think of that! Six dollars a week!

GOTICO. Who's this?

ISIDRO. My nephew. Well, keep on, and see if you can't get ahead.

PERICO. And I'm saving money—putting it in the bank—

ISIDRO. You are?

PERICO. Yes, sir.

ISIDRO. Well, maybe soon you can spend a whole dollar.

PERICO. How?

ISIDRO. Giving your cousin Paca a wedding present.

PERICO. A wedding present?

ISIDRO. It isn't fixed up yet, but (*looking at* GOTICO)—but you never can tell.

PERICO. I don't get it.

ISIDRO (*gesturing toward* GOTICO). There's something doing.

PERICO. Something doing? What's doing?

ISIDRO. Ain't the kid got no brains? I mean that this gentleman is in love with your cousin.

PERICO (*dumbfounded*). Don't kid me.

ISIDRO. And if I don't object—what's it to you?

PERICO (*aside*). God Almighty, Paca marryin' some one else!

ISIDRO. What's that?

GOTICO. What's the matter with you, Perico? Are you dumb?

PERICO (*raising his hands to his eyes*). God, I'm all wuzzy. Are you kidding me?

ISIDRO (*threateningly*). Perico!

PERICO. Uncle Isidro, you can skin me alive, if you want to, but don't say that again!

ISIDRO. What's the matter with you?

PERICO (*decidedly*). Paca'll not marry anybody else while I live.

ISIDRO. How's that?

PERICO. Uncle Isidro—I love her with all my heart and she loves me.

GOTICO. Well, what of it? Go on, get out or I'll kick you.

PERICO. Paca married to that freak!

GOTICO (*shouting*). I'm the Tornado.

PERICO. You're certainly looking for something.

ISIDRO. Perico!

GOTICO (*aside*). I'm afraid I can't get rid of him! (*To* PERICO) Are you going to get out of here or shall I bleed you? (*He draws his machete.*)

PERICO. If you don't kill me first, you'll wake up in the bone yard.

ISIDRO. Perico, be careful! (ISIDRO *covers his face.* PERICO *picks up a chair and goes after* GOTICO *who flees, throwing away his machete which* PERICO *picks up. They bump against* ISIDRO, *and finally* GOTICO *dives out of the window.*)

GOTICO. God help me, I'm through! (*Enter* NEMESIA *and* PACA.)

NEMESIA. What's up?

PACA (*running to* PERICO). Perico, dear!

PERICO. Paca, darling!

ISIDRO (*still bewildered*). Am I drunk?

PERICO. Uncle Isidro.

ISIDRO. Do you know what you've done?

NEMESIA. What's happening?

PERICO. How do I know? There was a man here trying to marry Paca and I—Aunt Nemesia, when I heard that—I thought about it and—well, I went crazy, that's all.

ISIDRO. Nemesia, do you know who that man was he attacked? The bravest man in the world!

NEMESIA. Isidro, if you don't shut up, there'll be another fight.

ISIDRO. But, woman—

NEMESIA. I can't stand such a fool man. Those professional bums seldom live up to their reputations. Better look for a quiet man and a straight one. That's what I say.

ISIDRO. What do you know about it? (*Turning with outstretched arms to his nephew.*) Come here, nephew. Now you've proved that you have some of my blood in your veins. Paca, kiss the man who's going to be your husband. (*They embrace.*)

PERICO. Paca!

PACA. Perico!

ISIDRO (*pointing to* PERICO). The bravest man in the world.

NEMESIA (*angrily*). Back to that, are you!

ISIDRO. Well, didn't he win out?

PERICO (*aloud to* ISIDRO, *boastfully and raising the machete*).

Uncle, from now on I promise you nothing in the world will frighten me. (*Enter* TIRULIQUI *with a mouse on a string.*)

TIRULIQUI. Mr. Isidro, I caught the fellow that was chewing my shoes. It was a mouse. (*Upon hearing this, near him,* PERICO *turns and shrieks and rushes across to hide behind* NEMESIA *and* PACA.)

PERICO. Oh!

ISIDRO (*surprised*). What's the matter with you?

PERICO (*trembling*). What? N-noth-nothing. Only I get sick when I see a rat.

ISIDRO. What's that?

NEMESIA (*ironically to* ISIDRO). Yes, you heard him! (*Laughing and pointing to the mouse*) Ha, ha, look at who's come here to run the show! (*To* ISIDRO, *sarcastically*) Good wine and tough guys don't last long.

ISIDRO (*after a pause*). Well, I won't stand for it. I'm capable of anything, and I'll prove it. (*To the audience, calmly.*) Right now, I am running over with bravery—I—I— (*He looks in all directions, stage struck, can't go on, and retreats in shame.*)

NEMESIA (*who has watched, smiling*). Esteemed audience, be indulgent toward all these brave men who are scared stiff.

CURTAIN

UNFAMILIAR QUOTATIONS

Strange, how the experiences made by thousands of millions of fellow creatures—which we know, talk of, accept—strike us, when *we* have to repeat them, with a sense of terrible newness, of unprecedented fatality and distress.—*The Man Who Never Understands.*

Don't be righteous. It's middle-class—and a terrible trait in a woman.—*Ferber.*

I know of only two classes of people who hate their own race . . . who travel principally to get away from their own people, who never speak of them except with loathing, who are pleased not to be taken as belonging to them. That is, the Americans and the Jews.—*Sinclair Lewis.*

Success or failure in business is caused even more by mental attitude than by mental capacities.—*W. D. Scott.*

For three things we should thank God: that we can not look into the future; that we did not have the courage to commit suicide when we felt like doing so, and that we did not marry the girl we first fell in love with.—*Sigrid Undset.*

THE MESQUITE

By Boyce House

Many poems have been written about trees—
Oaks, willows, elms, and pines;
Poplars, palms, cedars, and hemlocks:
Trees that are slender,
Others wide-spreading and strong,
That are a song to the eye, a feast to the ear—
Deep shade and tuneful branches, wind-swept and bird-haunted.

But no poet has ever sung of one tree—
An outcast, an Ishmael,
The mesquite.
It grows in the West.
Its wood is so tough it dulls the keenest axe-blade;
Its fruit—the gaudy mesquite-bean—is little more than an apple of Sodom;
Its shade is thin and ragged,
And its form is weirdly twisted.
A very parody of a tree—
Yes, the gods were laughing (you say) when they made the mesquite—the clown in the parade of growing things.

But your proud trees are in lands of rains, streams and rich loams:
The mesquite dares grow in a region where the air is crinkled with the heat,
The hills pant,
And the lizards lie breathless under the shade of rocks that are wrinkled and colorless.
The sand stretches as glaring and parched as a beach whose ocean has died.
Only the thorny cactus grows there—and the brave mesquite.

Its fraily fringed boughs flaunt like green flags in the face of advancing foes.
Horse and rider rest under its branches at noon.
After the cowboy has built a little fire of old mesquite limbs—

The aroma of the coffee and of the wood-smoke is very sweet—
(There is no other quite like it in the world).

And at night the moon is kind to the mesquite:
The gnarled outline is softened and silvered,
And the tree dreams of sighing waters and singing birds and laughing lovers.

IN A FAR COUNTRY

By Olga Achtenhagen

The heart of me is restless,
Though there's all the world to roam.
For the prodigal who waits too long
There is no going home.

There's a donkey cart in Derry,
And green lanes all the way
From Donegal to Blarney,
And Clonakilty Bay.

There's a hill of bracken burning
With a flame of yellow broom,
And a smoky haze of heather
Near a cottage in Macroom.

There's a shrine near Gauganne Barra,
Where the River Lee begins;
I could kneel before Our Lady,
And tell her all my sins.

There's a lake whose purple shadows
Know the flutter of gray wings . . .
The soft blue hush of twilight,
The peace that evening brings.

The heart of me is restless,
Though there's all the world to roam.
For the prodigal who waits too long
There is no going home.

AUTUMN

By Gordon E. Peterson

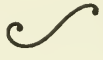
Are you the lovely thing
I used to hold in my arms
in the cool, clear twilights
of the early spring?

We used to dream together
linger near the rapids
where the frightened, silver waves
rushed by,
to lengthen out
in long, smooth bands of blue
where the water grew
deep again.

When dusk drew near
the deer
came down to drink.
And in the distance beyond,
where the tall gray walls
of the canyon's edge
stretched to the sky,
the giant waters flowed silent, full,
as swift as death
between the wide, green banks.
And there the river turned to disappear,
leaving the slender outlines of the wild deer
silhouetted
against the smooth, curved bank,
where it turned to follow the river
at its feet
into the deepening marble sunset
of the western horizon.

Are you the lovely thing
that used to bring me there
beside that silent stream
to dream
and love?

You seem so very different to me now.
You were my sweetheart then!
  So tender,
  beautiful.
I never knew that some day you
  would be—
More lovely, dear,
than everything on earth to me.



EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

By Allen E. Woodall

The man is gone, only the poet remains.
Flamonde, the wanderer, has found a home;
Bold Tristram treads the old remembered lanes
In Merlin's wood, quick with the scent of loam
And druid magic. Purple twilight falls
On Tilbury Town, on "Thebes, and Camelot."
Miniver enters glorious crumbling walls;
Old Eben finds a house that crumbles not.
All is fulfilled at last. He has gone down
Between "dark hills at evening in the west"
To find that other unforgotten Town
Down the River, where beyond the crest,
The Stream of Life flows into Lethe Stream.
Into his heritage the man has gone;
He will not see another sunset gleam;
For him remains to night only the dawn.

THE WANDERERS

FANTASY IN ONE ACT

By Maurice Ferber

Characters

Cain
Cartaphilus, *The Wandering Jew*
Time: *Now. Dead of winter. Long, northern twilight.*
Place: *A mountainous landscape in the high latitudes.*

In back, a painted cloth shows a cheerless twilight sky. From Right to Centre, a box set shows a most irregular panorama—rocky summits and peaks, fantastically carved—desolate, barren, with numerous snowdrifts From Centre to Left, a cycloramic set shows a practicable peak with precipitous slopes; and from the base, deep down, stretch out vast, dreary, snow-covered tundras. On this peak all the action takes place.

At curtain rise, Cartaphilus, *a bent old man, with head-covering, with short hair and beardless but wrinkled face, wearing a blue robe and bark sandals tied on with thongs, is seen kneeling on the peak, fairly well down stage, arms outstretched in prayer.*

Cartaphilus.

Christ, Christ, Mighty Christ, make me not young again.
(*After a moment, he rises.*)
'Mid clustered, craggy peaks and Arctic marshes,
And sombre twilight seemingly unceasing,
I do beseech Thee, I, Cartaphilus,
Thy servant, I implore Thee change me not.
'Tis generations, twoscore generations,
Since Thou didst stagger 'neath the sacred Cross,
Bending Thy mournful steps to Calvary,
And pleaded with me for a moment's comfort;
Christ, Christ, I drave Thee back. Then suddenly,
Resplendent with wondrous light unspeakable, Thou saidst,

The story of Cain is from the fourth chapter of Genesis. The story of the Wandering Jew may be found in any good encyclopedia. In some cases, he is called Ahasuerus; in others, Cartaphilus. The meeting of these two characters is of my own invention

"Wander thou shalt till thou beholdest Me
Arrayed once more in raiment of My Father.
And whensoe'er the semblance of an hundred winters
Thou wearest, straightway attain the frame of youth."

(*Gradually his form becomes erect, his wrinkles disappear, and he looks a man of twenty. While the change is taking place, he grasps his face and his back, and cries:*)

Oh, yet again! Would I might die, dear Lord.
For thou hast chastened me so oft already.
My Christ, I supplicate Thee, show Thyself.

In desolation he falls prone to the ground, head toward the front of the stage, repeatedly moaning, "Show Thyself." After an interval, CAIN *comes into view on the side of the peak, already near the top, wearily ascending. He is of large stature. A band of red covers his forehead; a dishevelled, faded gray beard comes halfway down his body; and from his bare head hang long, gray locks. He is dressed in a brown robe, and sandals of bark tied on with thongs.*

CAIN

O hateful Abel, causer of my woe,
If thou dost crave more vengeance, see Cain now.
See how Jehovah's curse hath broken me,
See how He maketh me to wander evermore.

Having reached the top, CAIN *makes gestures of despair as he looks back over the tundras. Then, as he moves toward the Right and the mass of summits confronts him, his despair seems ever to increase. Suddenly he catches sight of* CARTAPHILUS *on the ground. Stopping short, quivering, he instantly raises his forearm—to hide the brand. The arm is held upraised until stage directions to the contrary. Longing to approach* CARTAPHILUS, *yet certain the brand will make him flee,* CAIN *moves now toward him falteringly now toward the rear of the peak in dejection. At last, seeming to realize the hopelessness of his position, he is about to descend, when involuntarily he utters a half-stifled cry of anguish.*

CARTHAPHILUS, *hearing him, is startled into a standing posture, and, seeing him, retreats in wonder.*

CARTAPHILUS (*whispering*). A spirit! (CAIN *looks sorrowful.*)
Nay, a phantom. Mine eyes fail,
And summon up the specter of myself
In years immeasurable! That cry of anguish?
It moveth! Then 'tis a spirit! Thy mild gaze! (*Joyously.*)
Thou com'st from Him! He giveth heed at last!
I am forgiven! Blessèd, blessèd Lord,

In Thine own time Thou bindest up our wounds.
(CAIN *shudders.* CARTAPHILUS *speaks questioningly.*)
Why didst thou shudder? Verily thou seem'st so strange,
With arm upraised? Speak.
(CAIN *is silent.*) Thou art from Heaven?
(CAIN *is silent.*) Speak. Say thou com'st from Him.
(CAIN *is silent.*) I pray thee, speak.
(CAIN *dolefully shakes his head in the negative.* CARTAPHILUS *moans hopelessly.* CAIN *stretches out his free arm hesitatingly, as if afraid he were presuming.* CARTHAPHILUS *speaks with surprise.*)
If thou art mortal, I ne'er remarked such age.
CAIN (*pathetically*). Youth, youth, behold me.
CARTAPHILUS (*agitated.*)
Soon and thou shalt sleep,
Heedless of brooding gloom, and this bleak clime
No more to thee than ere thou wert conceived.
CAIN (*in dejection*). Oh, never, never.
CARTAPHILUS (*frightened*). Why dost thou say, "Oh, never"?
CAIN. I seek Earth's shrouding mantle all in vain.
CARTAPHILUS (*alarmed*). Leap from this summit.
CAIN. Life is my doom.
CARTAPHILUS (*terrified*). Thy doom?
CAIN.
Jehovah cursed me thus for smiting Abel:
"Be thou a fugitive and vagabond
On Earth; yet whosoever slayeth thee,
Sevenfold vengeance shall be taken on him." (*Broken-hearted.*) For I am Cain.
CARTAPHILUS (*very softly*). Cain?
CAIN (*falling on his knees, beseechingly*). Go not hence.
CARTAPHILUS (*puzzled*). But Cain?
CAIN (*clasping* CARTHAPHILUS's *knees*). Go not.
CARTAPHILUS (*attempting to lower* CAIN's *arm*). The brand!
CAIN.
No, no, thou wilt forsake me,
And flee swifter than from a pestilence.
CARTAPHILUS (*struggling*). The brand, I say!
CAIN.
Forsake me not. Consider
The ages I have wandered, solitary.

CARTAPHILUS (*uncovering the brand,—in consternation*). Thou he?
CAIN (*clinging to* CARTAPHILUS). My punishment is greater than I can bear.
CARTAPHILUS (*collapsing*). Jehovah! Christ— Cain still breathes! (*Bursting into tears,* CARTAPHILUS *bends down, throws his arms around* CAIN *in a paroxysm of emotion.*)
CAIN (*who has passed from a state of desolation to one of the greatest astonishment*). Thou—shunn'st—me not!
CARTAPHILUS (*piteously*). And wherefore should I?
CAIN. Wherefore? (*Overcome with joy, he embraces* CARTAPHILUS *violently.*)

Sweet throbbing, fiercely quivering mortal flesh,
I'll gripe thee as I would the God I hate.
Never shalt thou escape me, hear'st thou me?

(CARTAPHILUS *soothes* CAIN, *but all the time with eyes of sadness.—After a while,* CAIN *separates himself, much agitated, with a strange gaze.*)

Yet what availeth—thine embrace so loving?
CARTAPHILUS (*gently*). If there were aught to cheer thee,—
CAIN (*seizing* CARTAPHILUS's *hands, and trying to draw them to his own throat,—frantic*). Thou saidst aught!
CARTAPHILUS (*moving toward Right,—horrified*). Back, Cain.
CAIN (*pursuing him*). Thou shalt!
CARTAPHILUS (*shrinking from* CAIN). Thou frenzied, frenzied Cain.
CAIN (*disconsolately*). Deliver me from agony so cruel.
CARTAPHILUS. Transgress Jehovah's precepts?
CAIN (*scornfully*). Lov'st thou Him?
CARTHAPHILUS. Tempter, begone!
CAIN (*Same tone.*)

I found thee here consumed
With wailing. Doth He hearken? Lov'st thou Him?

CARTAPHILUS (*wavering*). I love Him—yea.
CAIN (*same tone*). Thou lov'st Him not!
CARTAPHILUS. I love Him.
CAIN (*more scornfully*). Oh, wherefore cherish Him?
CARTAPHILUS. He hath granted me—Hath granted—granted me—life.
CAIN. Verily! Thou lov'st Him not, thou know'st! Confess it!
CARTAPHILUS (*on the verge of breaking down*). Nay. (*Distracted at* CAIN's *tone, he rushes to the rear of the peak, as if to descend.*) Farewell.

CAIN (*in despondency*). Stay, stay.
CARTAPHILUS (*with sudden access of new faith in the Lord,—nobly*). Farewell. For all my days I will love the Lord of Hosts, Jehovah!
CAIN. Stay. (CAIN *moans hopelessly. From this point to the end, except where there are special stage directions,* CARTAPHILUS *has the appearance of calm suffering joined to pathetic tenderness.*)
CARTAPHILUS. Cain, Cain, thou art indeed ill-destined, Cain (*kissing* CAIN). Yet he who kisseth thee hath made his journey.
CAIN (*unimpressed*). As a suckling infant from its mother's breast,
Then back again.
CARTAPHILUS.
Not so, Oh, list to me.
For when Jehovah's Son—
CAIN (*moved*). Had He a Son?
CARTAPHILUS.
Yea, Christ His Name, and sojourned here on Earth,
Teaching His Father's Precepts, but unbelievers,
Who would not be instructed, rejected Him.
And I reviled Him as He went to die.
Then lo, aflame with radiance, He commanded:
"Wander thou shalt till thou beholdest Me
Arrayed once more in raiment of My Father.
And whensoe'er the semblance of an hundred winters
Thou wearest, straightway attain the frame of youth."
(CAIN *is frenzied.*)
'Tis not an hour since I was transformed!
CAIN (*exultingly*). Now none may say Jehovah is triumphant!
CARTAPHILUS. What shall prevent?
CAIN. Now we will slay each other!
CARTAPHILUS.
Ah, Cain so wretched, canst thou not understand?
For mortal hand can never ease my woe.
(CAIN *looks at* CARTAPHILUS *in dismay. During the following,* CARTAPHILUS *pretends to appear brave and hopeful.*)
Not destined for the winding sheets of Sheol,
A dole withheld not even from Earth's most evil,
Haply we still may find some little solace.
For after towering mountains we shall see
The glistening streams, the verdured valleys, the glens

So gently sloping, the leaping waterfalls,
Flecked with the rainbow hues of dewy morn,
Like Eden Garden in the Long Ago.
In smiling sunshine we'll beguile the time;

(*His real feelings however gradually breaking through.*)

And in the night, bathèd in moonbeams mild,
We'll softly murmur our lingering adoration,
As when our hearts harbored no thoughts of sin.
And with the midnight hour we'll scan the stars,
Pretending they're beacons guiding us to God.
And when their peace doth quench our scorching tears,
And we are tranquil, then I'll smooth thy couch—

CAIN. 'Twill be in shivering caverns or bursting craters.

CARTAPHILUS. And cradle thine eyes for thee in soothing slumber.

CAIN (*piteously*).

Each brute even has his mate whom he holds dear,
Yea, every living creature excepting me.

CARTAPHILUS.

But my devotion shall be wonderful,
Surpassing even Jonathan's for David.

CAIN.

Oh, see yon sculptured, stricken desolation,
And sullen, haunting twilight, more melancholy
Than sablest night. I go no farther.

CARTAPHILUS.

Take comfort.
For when that blessèd day is come when we
Are pardoned—

CAIN.

If we tarry till that day,
We'll wander ever—
(*burying his head in his robe*)
through eternity!

CARTAPHILUS (*appalled*).

That word! Utter it not! Eternity!
It seemeth so!
(*A pause.*)

CAIN (*suddenly,—imploringly*). Unless, unless, thou—thou—
(*Movement toward* CARTAPHILUS's *hands.*)

CARTHAPHILUS (*mournfully*).

Oh, witness my chastisement for deriding Christ.
How then may I provoke Jehovah's curse?

CAIN. What vengeance can augment thine agony?

CARTAPHILUS (*frightened by* CAIN'S *words because he realizes their tremendous potential strength toward his undoing*).

Oh, nay, nay, nay! Thou shouldst not have said that!
I would thou hadst not spoken, cruel Cain.

CAIN (*seeing his advantage and pressing it*).

Thou art the first who hath not fled in terror.
And after thee none other shall dare come nigh.
Have mercy.

CARTAPHILUS. Take thy life?

CAIN. Life's past enduring.

CARTAPHILUS. I yearn to aid thee—

CAIN. And thou shalt, thou shalt!

CARTAPHILUS (*in anguish*).

Cartaphilus, wretched Cartaphilus,
Thou art of God rejected!

CAIN (*from the depths of despair*). Oh, pity me.

(CAIN *slowly draws* CARTAPHILUS'S *hands to his own throat.* CARTAPHILUS, *seeming scarcely to know what he is doing, lets them rest there.*) Make haste.

CARTAPHILUS (*moaning*). Christ, Christ, O wherefore hear'st Thou not my prayers?

CAIN. Hasten.

CARTAPHILUS.

Father Omnipotent.
Almighty King, Eternal and Infinite,
Creator. Though we have waited for Thy grace
So patiently, Thou tak'st no note of us.
Though we have meditated in Thy statutes,
Thou hidest Thy Face in sable clouds; and surely
Thou must abhor us. Though we are penitent,
Thou dost abandon us completely, and
Dost strip us naked, yea, and shatter us,
And cast us off forever. Gracious God,
I mean not to rebel, but myriad voices
Are urging, urging me to succor Cain.

(*In a tone of agony*) Another kiss. (*Kissing* CAIN, *then suddenly irresolute*) I cannot. Nay, I cannot. (*In a long, last appeal*)

Christ, lily-flower of a crimson world.

CAIN (*in a faraway, chant-like tone, as though he loves the sound of each and every syllable*). Cartaphilus. (CARTAPHILUS, *turning his head away, as if not to see what he is about to do, begins to tighten his hold on* CAIN'S *neck, then suddenly throws down his hands in awful fear.*)

CARTAPHILUS. Thou art the Image of God!

CAIN. God's Image! (*The truth rushing in upon him*) Then so was Abel! (*with contrition*) Forgive me, Father.

Simultaneously a gigantic bolt of lightning cleaves the sky, there is a terrific crash of thunder, and CAIN *falls dead.* CARTHAPHILUS *starts back in terror. There is a moment's extraordinary stillness. Then all at once a wondrously beautiful light permeates stage and sky and, with a cry of ecstasy,* CARTHAPHILUS *totters and sinks lifeless to the ground.*

CURTAIN

A LITTLE HILL

BY PAULINE OGDEN

You cannot love a mountain
That shoulders mist apart,
But you can love a little hill,
And clasp it to your heart.

A little hill that lifts its head
Where playful breezes run
Across the gently waving grass,
Sweet-scented in the sun.

You cannot love a mountain
That comrades with the sky,
The resting-place of clouds and snow,
So arrogant and high.

Let eagles soar where pointing pines
March gravely to the crest,
But give to me a little hill
With flowers on its breast.

PURPLE COBWEBS

A Play in One Act

By Frank Dougall Crane

Scene: *The editorial outer office of 'Sweepings,' an advanced literary publication of more aesthetic than financial distinction. The furniture consists of an old typewriter, a typewriter table, and two or three shabby chairs. At the back there is a door, evidently leading to a private office, on which appears in neat black: 'Leo Pinsky, Editor.'* Margery *is seated at the typewriter.*

Margery *is the unusual girl. Her eyes are wide, and her chin very firm; she has seen a star, and needs all her stubbornness to keep her wagon hitched to it. She is not young, twenty-six perhaps, which is one of the oldest of ages. She is dressed tastefully, a trifle unconventionally—to show her personality—and with almost threadbare economy.*

She finishes a letter on the machine, and puts in a fresh sheet. Then, slowly, writes three lines, and stops.

Margery (*raptly*). "My soul is veiled
As with purple cobwebs
Fringing to earth."

(Mr. Pinsky *comes in, briskly. He is small and foreign looking, with an habitual air of expectancy and preoccupation.*)

Mr. Pinsky (*bruskly*). Good morning. Anyone to see me? Where's the mail?

Margery. No. On your desk.

Mr. Pinsky. Got those letters finished yet? No? Hurry up with them. Want to dictate some more. (*Goes toward inner office.*)

Margery. Mr. Pinsky,—

Mr. Pinsky. Don't bother me now, very busy—

Margery. But I must speak to you!

Mr. Pinsky. Not now, I say, no time. (*Goes on toward office.*)

Margery. But I'm going to quit!

Mr. Pinsky (*stands horror-stricken for a moment, comes back; softly*). Quit! Did you say quit?

MARGERY. Yes,—that is, I feel perhaps I ought to leave.

MR. PINSKY. Leave the magazine? Leave me?

MARGERY (*defensively*). After all, you know, you're not paying me any salary.

MR. PINSKY. My dear girl, I explained all that to you.

MARGERY. But I can't live on explanations. You said when the magazine became prosperous, I should be rewarded. And meantime—

MR. PINSKY. Meantime it is for art. Art, the most precious, the most sacred effluvium of existence. The consecrated flame around which we are privileged to watch like Vestal Virgins, that its sacred light may illumine the ages and be handed on to generations to come. This is our privilege, if we are worthy of it.

MARGERY. Still—

MR. PINSKY. To us have been entrusted the aspirations of mankind, the noble strivings, the hopes, the inspirations, all that raises man above the clouds. Is it for us to talk of money?

MARGERY. I know, but—

MR. PINSKY. And you especially, you who have within you that precious, that priceless gift, you in whom Poetry strives constantly for expression—that you should become sordid!

MARGERY. Do you really think I have the gift?

MR. PINSKY. Unquestionably. I have never seen so pure a talent, so unfettered by the conventions of rhetoric and grammar. Another year, perhaps two, of association with free, unchained spirits—you will rival Amy Lowell!

MARGERY. If only I could! (*Hesitantly.*) I—I wrote something last night—

MR. PINSKY (*bruskly again*). Not now. No time. Show it to me later. I must have those letters. (*Goes into his office.*)

MARGERY. Yes, sir.

(*Enter* EDITH. EDITH *is evidently the practical girl. Her clothes are neat, unremarkable, and may be relied on to wear. She is rather impressed by the big city, but no one shall ever know it! She has the awareness of superiority which one naturally feels toward relatives who have been to college. Younger than* MARGERY, *she is attractive in a more commonplace way.*)

MARGERY. Why, Edith!

EDITH (*rather shortly*). Hello, Marge. (*Looks around the office.*) So this is the place.

MARGERY. I didn't know you were in town, Edith. How's mother?

EDITH. No better.

MARGERY. She's not worse?

EDITH. No. Just so-so. Middling.

MARGERY. Poor mother! She's always been middling, ever since I can remember.

EDITH (*resentfully*). No wonder. Some folks have a lot to put up with.

MARGERY (*sweetly*). Meaning me?

EDITH. Yes, since you say so. I should think you'd see how hard it is on mother to have you in a place like this. People think it's a wonder you wouldn't go to work, or get married, or something,—and after all the expense of college, too.

MARGERY. I am working. I suppose you think I ought to be in a place like Schultz's Emporium.

EDITH. Well, if you were in my job, you'd be in a respectable place at least, where there's no long-haired poets or loose artists hanging around.

MARGERY. No, I can't imagine them infesting the Emporium. But I'm working just the same. Whether you think so or not, my job's as hard as yours.

EDITH. Hm! People that really work get paid for it. I suppose you think mother should be proud to keep sending you money, month after month, so that you can live on here, doing nothing—

MARGERY. My dear, you just don't understand. It's for Art.

EDITH. Art! I think it's all the bunk!

MARGERY. Yes, Art. Around which we who are privileged watch like Vestal Virgins, so—so the lamp won't go out. All the aspirations of mankind—and you talk of money!

EDITH. Well—

MARGERY. Divine inspiration,—all that raises man above the clouds, above the clods. And you can speak of getting paid!

EDITH. Well, people have to live, art or no art.

MARGERY. Art has to live, people or no people.

EDITH. It's no use talking to you, I can see that. But anyway, I've done my duty. As for me, I'd rather keep books at the Emporium for real money than work for art—with holes in my stockings.

MARGERY (*pulls her skirt down quickly*). Perhaps it's better that you should, dear.

(EDITH *rises, fingers irritably the papers on* MARGERY'S *table.*)

EDITH (*reading*). "My soul is veiled
As with purple cobwebs
Fringing to earth."
My God!

(MARGERY *takes paper from her, puts it down.*)

EDITH. Is that art?

MARGERY. I—I hope so. It's the best thing I've done yet, I think.

EDITH. Good heavens, what are the rest like!

MARGERY. I shouldn't expect you to understand it, dear. You just run along home to mother and tell her not to worry about me. And perhaps—perhaps some day she may even be proud of me!

EDITH. I doubt it. I suppose it's no use my saying that I think you ought to come back to Mayfield and quit this nonsense.

MARGERY. No, I'm afraid it isn't.

EDITH. Well, I wish you joy of your art. (*Starts to leave.*)

MARGERY. Edith; have you seen anything of Harry lately?

EDITH. Harry Stedman?

MARGERY. Yes, of course.

EDITH. He came up with me on the train.

MARGERY. He's here?

EDITH. Waiting outside in the hall. He wants to see you. I told him to wait, I wanted to talk to you before you saw him. I think he's got something to say to you,—you used to care for him.

MARGERY. Oh, that was long ago.

EDITH. Yes, it was. You're getting old. It's now or never, Marge. You know what we want, what mother wants. Marriage, not—purple cobwebs! (MARGERY *does not reply.*) I'll send him in. (*Exit.*)

(MARGERY *sits still after she has gone, evidently in deep thought.*)

MR. PINSKY (*within*). Miss Lawrence!

(MARGERY *does not hear him; the door bursts open and* MR. PINSKY *comes out.*)

MR. PINSKY (*relieved*). I thought you'd left.

MARGERY. No, I was just thinking. Is there something you want?

MR. PINSKY. Yes, the letters. Give me those you have ready; I'll look over the rest later. (*Takes papers.*)

MARGERY. Mr. Pinsky,—

MR. PINSKY. Now, now, now! Really I'm too busy. Show it to me tomorrow. No time to read anything.

(MARGERY *has more to say, but* MR. PINSKY *has gone back to his office and banged the door. She sighs a little wearily. Enter* HARRY.

HARRY *is the sturdy, dependable type, the man who stays in his home town and prospers there. He is attractive in a good-natured, heavy-set fashion, honest, not clever enough to be dissatisfied or get into difficulties, and thoroughly practical. Probably he is rather well thought of by the ladies; at least, the great resolve now burning within him does not make his manner diffident.*)

MARGERY. Hello, Harry.

HARRY. How are you, Margery? (*He hands her a rose; it is somewhat wilted, but still a rose.*) Know where that came from? Off the bush you gave me two years ago.

MARGERY. The Papa Gonchet!

HARRY. I never could get the name straight. In fact, I don't care much about flowers, but I knew you liked them, so I brought this one.

MARGERY. It was nice of you, Harry. (*Lays the rose on her table.*) I haven't seen you for a long time. Sit down. How are you?

HARRY (*settling himself comfortably*). Oh, I'm fine. I just enlarged the store. Business is fine for this time of the year.

MARGERY (*sitting on the edge of her desk*). I'm glad to hear it. How are your folks?

HARRY. All fine. Hetty was talking about you just the other day. She saw a piece by you in one of the magazines, the Literary—what-you-call-'em?

MARGERY. Literary Discriminator?

HARRY. Yes, guess that was it. One of those fancy high-brow things that look like cheap newspapers.

MARGERY. It was only a book review.

HARRY. Well, I guess it ain't everyone can get things printed like that, with your name and everything. I tell you the folks in Mayfield are pretty proud to see you right up among the best of them. You're the only writing celebrity we got, except Mabel Minnick that won a limerick contest, and that don't hardly count. Yessir, we're right proud of you.

MARGERY. I'm glad they still remember me.

HARRY. Oh, you're not forgotten. Not only on account of your writing, either. There's lots of us still remember the

chocolate fudge cakes you used to make—don't seem like anybody ever could make them just like you did.

MARGERY. For heaven's sake!

HARRY. It's a fact. Many's the time I've thought of them, all brown, with thick, gooey frosting, and whipped cream. I—I've missed you, Margie.

MARGERY. Have you?

HARRY. You remember the Sunday evenings I used to have supper at your house—sandwiches it'd be, and maybe fruit,—and then the fudge cake! I don't hardly know what to do with myself Sunday nights any more. I—well, I miss you a lot. You oughtn't to waste yourself up here writing poetry and such. It ain't practical!

MARGERY. No, I suppose it isn't.

HARRY Come on back and—

MARGERY. Make fudge cake?

HARRY. Yes,—no, I mean come back and be Mrs. Stedman.

MARGERY. You mean, marry you?

HARRY. Uh-huh. Business is pretty good; we could go right off to Niagara Falls while Hetty has the house fixed up a bit. I was going to get a bigger car this year, but we can let that go.—What do you think of the idea?

MARGERY (*amused, and yet not so very much amused*). It's nice of you to ask me, Harry, awfully nice. I do appreciate it. But I couldn't give up my career.

HARRY Your what?

MARGERY. My career. Writing. Art.

HARRY (*unconvinced*). Oh, that!

MARGERY (*determined to convince him, and perhaps herself, too*). You don't realize that for some of us, those who are privileged to tend the flame of art, it's the most important thing in life. Nothing must interfere with our high calling, our sacred ministration, our Art—

HARRY (*jumping up*). Oh, the hell with art!

MARGERY. Oh!

HARRY. Don't fool yourself with that bunk. Art! A lot of wild-eyed foreigners and silly girls cutting up flapdoodles and patting themselves on the back! Wearing trick clothes and raving stuff they can't understand themselves!

MARGERY. Really, I think we'd better not discuss it.

HARRY. We will discuss it. (*Changing his tone.*) Margie,

you're too fine a girl to waste yourself on all this. Where is it getting you? There's something better in life than all this tommyrot—haven't you ever thought of a home of your own, a man's love, children,—the happiness that women, all women, have a right to? It wouldn't be much, Margie, but it would be home, your home,—and you know I'd always love you.—I came all the way up from Mayfield just to ask you.

MARGERY. Harry, I—Oh, I don't know.

HARRY. Folks in Mayfield will be mighty glad to see you back,—course they aren't swell people like you run around with here—but they're good homey folks, and they'd be proud of you. You'd be president of the literary society in no time. Come on, won't you?

MARGERY (*after a pause*). If I thought you really loved me, Harry, I—I guess maybe I would. It isn't as rosy as it may look, all this. That book review that Mayfield is so proud of—that brought in the grand sum of three dollars. And it's the only thing I've had published in two years. I try to keep up courage—but I'm sick of it all—writing, writing, trying to say something, breaking your heart to put yourself on paper! And always,—failure!

HARRY. Sure. What's the use of going on with it? Come back with me, dear. (*Takes her hands.*) Think how glad your mother will be to have you back in town, married and settled down.

MARGERY. Poor mother. She feels sure I've gone astray.

HARRY. You like me, Margie, and I've always liked you. Will you come back with me?

MARGERY. Yes,—if you're sure you want me. (HARRY *embraces her, she turns her head from him.*) And so I will never be famous!

HARRY. You're famous already,—in Mayfield.

MARGERY (*slipping away from him*). Marriage—conventions—housework—cooking—

HARRY. Fudge cake.

MARGERY. No more spiritual companionship, poetry—

HARRY. You'll have lots of time to write poetry between times.

MARGERY. While the cake's in the oven!

HARRY. Well, get your things, dear, and let's go. We can be married this afternoon.

(MARGERY *looks around the room, a last look, and starts for*

her hat and coat. The inner door burst open; MR. PINSKY *comes out brandishing a paper.*)

MR. PINSKY. Stupendous! Wonderful! *Merveilleux!*

MARGERY. What?

MR. PINSKY. What freedom! What imagery! Listen (*Passionately.*)

"My soul is veiled
As with purple cobwebs
Fringing to earth."

"Fringing to earth."—a stroke of sheer genius! Where did this come from?

MARGERY. It's mine. I wrote it—it must have got in with the letters.

MR. PINSKY. Such power! "My soul is veiled—"

MARGERY. "As with purple cobwebs—"

MR. PINSKY AND MARGERY. "Fringing to earth!'

HARRY. Good God!

MARGERY. Oh, Harry, I've done it. I've done it!

HARRY. Yes,—er, of course.—Never mind, nobody'll ever know.

MR. PINSKY (*to himself*). "My soul is veiled—is veiled." Wonderful!

MARGERY. Do you think it's really good, Mr. Pinsky?

MR. PINSKY. Good! It's superb!

MARGERY. Oh, I'm so glad!

MR. PINSKY. It's utterly new in technique—you will found a school, a movement. We must have it in our next issue—on the front page.

MARGERY. Oh, Mr. Pinsky!

MR. PINSKY. Call me Leon, Margery. We are fellow-workers in the cause of Art. You have proved yourself worthy. Together we shall hold high the torch, illuminating and inspiring the souls of the emancipate.—"My soul is veiled."

HARRY (*violently*). Purple cobwebs!

MARGERY (*softly*). Fringing to earth. (*A pause.*)

MR. PINSKY (*bruskly, retreating to his lair*). I must have those letters, Miss Lawrence. If anyone calls, I'm busy, very busy. (*Exit within.*)

MARGERY. Yes, Mr. Pinskly.

HARRY. Well, if that's your boss, it's time someone took you out of here. He's batty.

MARGERY. "My soul is veiled"—Oh, I'm so happy! I did it!

HARRY (*beginning to realize that his work is cut out for him all over again*). Well, it's nice you did it, whatever it is, before you leave.

MARGERY. Leave? Oh, I can't leave now! Don't you see what it means? All that I've hoped for, longed for,—yes, almost starved for, has come true. My poem—mine—will be published; I'll write more—they may not all be as good, but some will be—I've arrived—I'm a poet!

HARRY. But you just promised to marry me.

MARGERY. Oh, that was before I knew—I hoped and prayed, but I didn't *know*. Now I must carry on the torch—

HARRY. Damn the torch! You promised.

MARGERY. I must be true to myself, Harry. (*Enter* EDITH, *with a package.*)

MARGERY (*goes up to her*). Oh, Edie,—the best news! One of my poems is going to be published.

EDITH. Not the one about purple cobwebs, I hope.

MARGERY. Yes, that's the one. Mr. Pinsky says it's good, very good,—superb—

EDITH. He must be a nut. (*Puts package down on* MARGERY'S *table.*) Stockings—black lisle—three pairs.

MARGERY (*considerably moved*). Thank you, Edith.

EDITH. The Lord knows you need them. A Lawrence with holes in her stockings! You ought to quit this nonsense and come home. Ask Harry, here, he'll tell you the same thing.

HARRY (*sulky,—as indeed who wouldn't be*). I've been telling her. And if it hadn't been for these damn purple cobwebs—

MARGERY. Listen, Harry. Forget what might have been. Might-have-beens aren't practical; they're only for poets. They're our stock in trade; we cherish the things that might have happened, lovely things, beautiful hours, we treasure them—and make verses of them. But they aren't practical. I'm afraid you'll never understand them. It's better—just to forget. (*She sees that neither of them have the slightest idea what she is talking about.*) And now, Harry, I'll tell you a secret—I've deceived you.

HARRY. Huh?

MARGERY. About the cake. It wasn't I that made it. All the times you came to dinner and ate fudge cake and thought how wonderful I was—and all the times since when you've thought

tenderly of me and my beautiful cakes—you were deceived. Yes, life is like that.

EDITH. You shouldn't have told him.

MARGERY. Why not,—now? You see, Harry, I never could cook anything. But I was fond of you,—oh, quite foolishly fond, for a while,—and you were fond of food.

HARRY. And you didn't make them?

MARGERY. No. None of them. Not even one little cake. Edith made them.

HARRY. Edith!

EDITH. Yes, Harry.

MARGERY. And she still makes them, Harry,—oh, the most delightful cakes, rich brown, thick frosting, smothered in cream—

EDITH. You haven't come to see us, hardly, since Margery left.

HARRY. No. I haven't. But I will!

MARGERY. Of course he will. Every Sunday evening. And soon he'll—Run along now, children; you'll just have time to make the ten-forty. (*She begins to bustle them out cheerily.*) Thank you for the stockings, Edie. You're a sweet girl. You'll make some man very happy. And thank you too, Harry, for the might-have-been. Run along—give my love to mother—. Goodbye—(*They are gone.*) (*She picks up the flower on her desk, and sits pensive for a moment. Then her expression becomes rapt.*)

MARGERY (*ecstatically*).

"My soul is veiled
As with purple cobwebs
Fringing to earth."

MR. PINSKY (*within*). Miss Lawrence! Hurry with those letters!

MARGERY (*happily*). Yes, Mr. Pinsky.

(*Tremendous clatter of the typewriter as the curtain falls.*)

Scandal will rub out like dirt when it is dry.—*English Proverb.*

If you have one true friend you have more than your share.—*English Proverb.*

Time is the file that wears and makes no noise.—*English Proverb.*

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